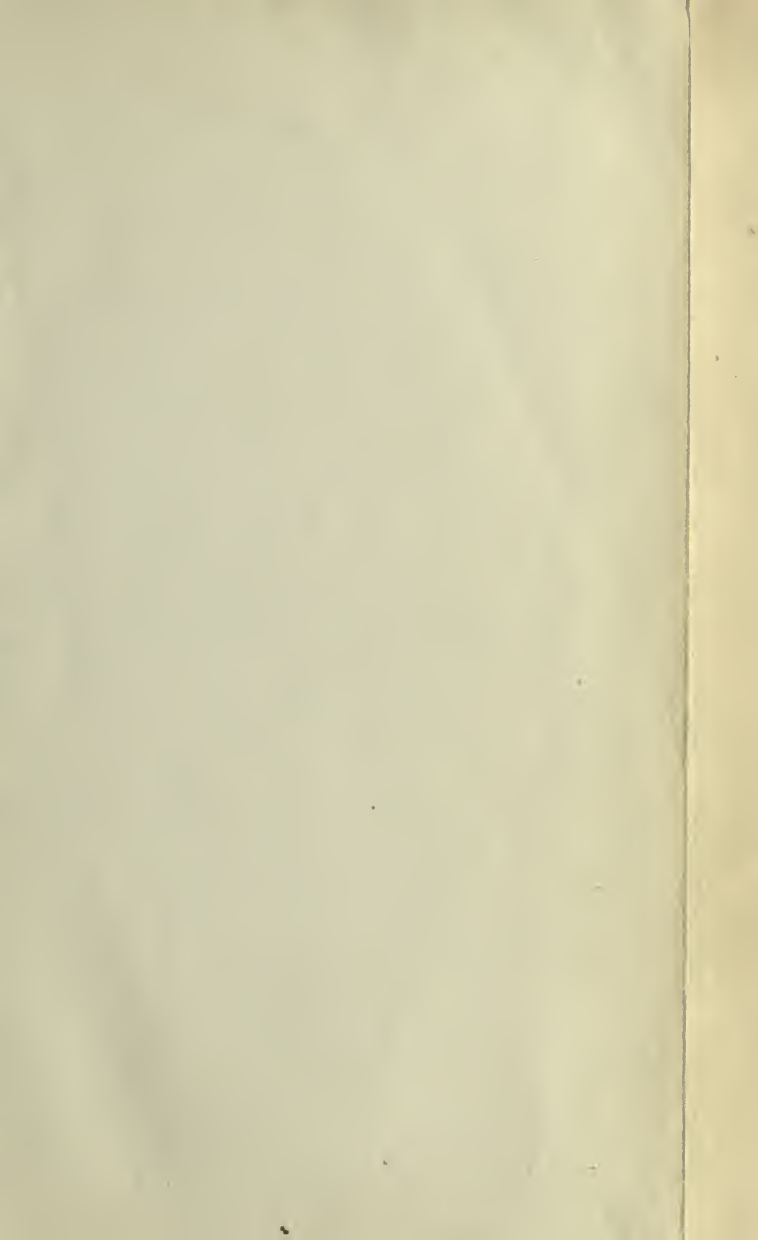



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*January, 1888.*



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# CHRISTIANITY AND SECULARISM

COMPARED IN THEIR  
INFLUENCE AND EFFECTS.

BY

THE REV. W. G. BLAIKIE, D.D., LL.D.

*(Professor in the New College, Edinburgh),*

AUTHOR OF

"BETTER DAYS FOR WORKING PEOPLE," "THE PERSONAL LIFE OF DAVID  
LIVINGSTONE," ETC.



THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:

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## Argument of the Tract.

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CHRISTIANITY and Secularism are to be tested by their fruits. Early and recent achievements of Christianity show the excellence of the fruit-tree. Objections on the ground of corruption, imperfect fruits, etc., are examined and met. Secularist objections are then specially dealt with. First, the attack of Secularism on the *principles* of Christianity is stated and examined. Christianity does not teach men to despise this life, nor to succumb to all injustice and oppression; it appeals to men's hopes and fears of future retribution, but at the same time it calls in and exercises all that is noble in us. George Eliot's article on *Worldliness and Other-Worldliness* is examined and criticised. Christianity does not demand a submission to arbitrary authority, but requires obedience to the will of God as the expression of all that is best and most wholesome. Secular obedience to natural law is shown to involve the same principle as Christian obedience to revealed law. The principles of Secularism are then examined, and found wanting. The place of atheism in secular systems is indicated. From Dr. Flint's criticism of certain secular principles it is seen that they are open to great objection. The want of a *moral dynamic* in secularism is pointed out. It is shown that secularism borrows certain principles from the Bible, not the Bible from secularism. The outstanding *facts* connected with the efforts of the two systems are next examined. It is shown that secularism has no great list of benefactors to the race, while in every department Christianity abounds in such. It is shown too that efforts for civil and religious liberty in this country have been greatly stimulated by religion. The paper concludes with a story of a waif showing that only a full, free Gospel is capable of reaching the wanderer and restoring him to his Father's house.



# CHRISTIANITY AND SECULARISM

COMPARED IN THEIR

INFLUENCE AND EFFECTS.



“**D**o men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?” Is not the tree known by its fruits? Christianity and Secularism both claim to be good fruit-trees, in respect of their civilizing and elevating influence. It ought not to be very difficult to decide which is best. We believe that the decision must be wholly in favour of Christianity; but Secularism cries “No!” and demands a scrutiny.

Systems tested by their fruits.

When Christianity first appeared there was no need for any scrutiny. Its purifying, elevating, and civilizing effects were plain to every one who had eyes to see. Under the influence of Paganism, society, in the Roman world, had become almost hopelessly corrupt. Roman poets, historians, and philosophers bear frightful testimony to the undisguised abominations which abounded in Rome itself, the most refined city in the world. Vice was not only rampant, but it was utterly shameless. On all hands it is admitted that Christianity

Triumphant result at the rise of Christianity

was like the introduction of fresh life-blood into a wasted body, ready to perish. It was a new thing to see men enduring torture and surrendering their lives rather than utter a hollow word. It was a new thing to see strong men exposing themselves to peril to protect the weak, or sacrificing their comforts to feed the hungry or to clothe the naked. "How these Christians love one another!" was the exclamation which such sights provoked. "What women these Christians have!" was the remark when the life-long virtue of such a woman as Anthusa, the widowed mother of Chrysostom, passed under review. In later times, alas, Christianity was less marked for its purity, and we find instances of men, when pressed to become Christians, retorting, "What good would it do us to be Christians, when such a one is a cheat in business, and such another a tyrant in his house?"

Modern  
instances.

Fiji.

In our own time we have had some beautiful illustrations of the power of Christianity to civilize and elevate the most barbarous communities. We have seen some of the Fiji and other islands transformed from the wildest savagery and cannibalism, into orderly, industrious, and intelligent communities.<sup>1</sup> We have seen bright oases springing up at Kuruman and Lovedale, and other spots in the Kaffrarian desert. And the whole history of eighteen centuries has shown more or less that the

<sup>1</sup> See, *inter alia*, Miss Gordon Cumming's *At Home in Fiji*, 1881.



progressive civilization of the world is found under the shadow and shelter of Christianity. We fear no challenge when we affirm that in its purest form Christianity has fostered the ideas and encouraged the habits out of which all true civilization springs. It has fostered regard for *man* as essentially a noble being, having an immortal soul made in God's image, with boundless capacities of expansion and improvement; regard for *woman* as the helpmeet and companion of man, — not his drudge, or slave, or concubine; regard for *marriage* as a holy contract, entered into before God, not to be lightly set aside; regard for *children* as the heritage of the Lord, — not burdens and incumbrances, but lent by the Lord to be brought up for Him; regard for the *family* as a divine institution, intended to be a fountain of holy joys, and a nursery of all estimable habits and all kindly affections; regard for the *sick*, the *infirm*, and the *aged*, whose sorrows we are ever to pity, and whose privations we are to make up in some measure from our more ample stores. The very word Christian, in its true spirit, has been identified with all these ideas and habits; in that sense it has a glory all its own; and no juster criticism can be passed on persons outraging truth and rectitude, than that they are a disgrace to the Christian name.

Principles of  
Christian  
civilization.

More than this, we affirm that in the region of morality, Christianity has fostered a spirit of truth

Moral  
influence of  
Christianity.

and fair dealing between man and man; so that over the world Christian traders, for example, bear on the whole a different character from those who are not Christian. Thus much we may still say in spite of painful drawbacks. Christian tribunals have a reputation for justice unknown in Mahometan and other countries, where bribery and corruption are so prevalent; more regard is paid to the rights of the poor; and the oppression of the defenceless is counted shameful. In the region of political life greater pains are taken to secure orderly government, to protect life and property, and to encourage industry and commerce; greater pains are taken too (álas, sometimes far too little!) to maintain peace and friendship with other communities, and, as the result of this, commodities are more freely exchanged, and the welfare of both sides is advanced. Moreover, under the shadow of Christianity, art, science, and literature have flourished and advanced; indeed, there is hardly such a thing as enlightened science or literature in any modern nation not professing Christianity.

Yet the salt  
may lose its  
savour.

We readily admit that Christianity is capable of being corrupted on the one hand, and reduced to dead formalism on the other; and that in both of these cases the salt loses its savour. That this would happen in the history of the Church,—that there would be most grievous error and declension, followed by wild violence and bitter persecution,—



was clearly foretold by Christ and His Apostles.<sup>1</sup> But wherever Christianity exists in its true character, it always acts beneficially on human society. It gives its tone to the laws and institutions of the country; it educates the people, it liberates the slave, it cares for the poor, it heals the sick, it fosters the arts of peace, it mitigates the horrors of war; and, not content with improving the condition of those at home, it takes to its heart the remotest nations of the earth, and plans, labours, and prays that all its blessings and privileges may flow out to the whole family of man.

We are not allowed, however, in these days to say all this unchallenged. Our argument on the elevating influence of Christianity on society has been questioned both on general and on special grounds. In this tract our chief business will be with the special objections of Secularists; we will therefore touch but lightly, in the first place, on some of the more general objections to the argument arising from the effects of Christianity.

Our  
argument  
challenged

It is objected (*a*) that Christianity has not even been able to keep itself pure, free from the corruption of foreign or worldly elements; (*b*) that it has failed to absorb and supersede all other religions, as it would have done had it really been the only divine religion for man; (*c*) that it has often shown

Four  
objections

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii. 25; xxiv. 12; Acts xx. 29, 30; 2 Thess. ii. 8, 9; 2 Tim. iii. 2.

a persecuting spirit, and a reliance on force as the instrument of its advance ; and (*d*) that it has failed conspicuously to extirpate evils of the grossest and most repulsive kind ; it has failed to abolish war · it has failed to root out drunkenness and debauchery, so that in our large cities even now, towards the end of the nineteenth century, we find much of the old pagan disorder and sensuality under the very shadow of the Christian Church.<sup>1</sup>

Corruptibility of Christianity implies essential purity.

In reply to all this we have to remark,

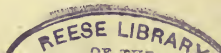
(*a*) That the liability of Christianity to become corrupted by worldly elements, so far from proving that it is of mere human origin, is a proof of the opposite. As we have said, Christ and His apostles foretold it. But besides this, let it be observed that if, like the pagan religions, or like Mahometanism or Mormonism, Christianity had been of man, it would have been sure to have enough of worldly elements in its own composition, and half-hearted adherents would not have required to borrow these from a foreign source. The Christianity of the New Testament is too pure for human nature before it is changed by Christian influence ; and when men do not yield themselves to it wholly, they are glad to mix it with more palatable

<sup>1</sup> These and similar objections to Christianity, as an agent of civilization and human progress, will be found more or less formally stated by Buckle, Lecky, Amberley, Paine, Holyoake, Bradlaugh, Watts, and other opponents of Christianity.

materials in order to adapt it in some degree to their unrenewed taste. This explains the corruption of Christianity. But Christianity itself ought no more to be rejected because it has been corrupted by worldly admixture, than silver should be pronounced worthless because it is tarnished by exposure to the air.

(b) Again, the failure of Christianity to absorb other religions is no argument against its divine origin when the nature of the provision for spreading it is considered. It was never intended to be made known directly or at once *to all*; it was first to be communicated to a selected few, and these were charged with the duty of making it known to others. This is uniformly the method enjoined in the Christian books. It depends for efficiency on the faithfulness of those to whom the charge is given first. But in a vast number of cases, the recipients of the Gospel have been careless of this duty, and hence the limited diffusion of Christianity. Is that to be pleaded against its divine origin? Many parents neglect their duty to their children, but for all that, we all hold that the family institute is a blessed arrangement. The best system in the world is helpless if it be not worked by an efficient executive. Surely it would be the very essence of unfairness to confound the system with its officers, and condemn

Nature of  
provision for  
spreading  
Christianity



the one for the manifest and inexcusable negligence of the other.

Charge of  
intolerance  
met.

(c) In like manner the charge of intolerance and persecution does not tell against Christianity itself, but against its mistaken and faithless administrators. It is not pretended by our opponents that the Christian books enjoin intolerance and persecution. No word can be quoted from the lips of our Lord or His apostles that gives the faintest countenance to such a policy. Such words as the following point in the opposite direction: "Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves." "All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." "My kingdom is not of this world, else would My servants fight." It is indeed lamentable to think how much intolerance and persecution have prevailed in some branches of the Christian Church. But in so far as these weapons have been used, violence has been done to the true spirit of Christ. It is no real objection to our argument that Christianity propagated by force has not been a blessing to the world; for force kills love, and Christianity without love is like a body without the soul.

Failure of  
Christianity  
to eradicate  
great evils.

(d) It is a more serious objection that Christianity, even where it has been most successful, has failed to root out gross corruption—such as drunkenness, greed, cruelty, and war. But here it is indispensable to bear in mind how Christianity works.

It is not like the light or the air, influencing all men alike. It becomes a great transforming and renewing power only in the case of those who receive Christ into their hearts. Our Lord Himself taught emphatically that in order to fruitfulness there must be such a union with Him as that of the branch to the vine. No phrase occurs more frequently in the writings of St. Paul than "in Christ." Christians, therefore, so called, are really of two kinds, those who have Christ in their hearts, and those who make only a profession of following Him. It is the first only who can be expected to manifest the real spirit of Christianity. Now, the force of the Christian current in any community can only be in proportion to the number and earnestness of such persons. Unhappily, hitherto, no great community has ever consisted permanently and wholly of such elements.

Christianity, therefore, has never yet been seen in this world in its full strength. It has always had an antagonist, and its nett results have been only in the proportion in which its own power has prevailed over antagonistic forces. If, in spite of this antagonism, the influence of Christianity on society has on the whole been wholesome and beneficent, the testimony thus arising to its heavenly origin is all the more striking. If a goodly crop of wheat has been reaped even where the enemy has been busy sowing tares, the excellence of the

Systems to  
be judged  
by their  
essential  
tendencies.



wheat and of the husbandry which produced it is the more fully shown. It is ever to be borne in mind that in many respects Christianity is not acceptable to the human mind as it exists unchanged; that while on the whole it commends itself as a divine provision for man's need, it encounters much dislike and opposition from man's waywardness and wilfulness, and to a corresponding extent its influence is neutralized. But, as Butler remarks in his *Analogy*, the merits of systems are often to be judged by their essential tendencies, rather than by their actual achievements. It is objected to Butler's doctrine of the government of the world being founded on virtue, that virtue does not always overcome vice. True, says Butler; but virtue even in this world *tends* to prevail, and hence you may infer that the government of the world rests on virtue.

Butler's  
argument.

Essential  
tendencies of  
Christianity.

Its precepts.

Its motives.

So Christianity even in Christian countries has not wholly overcome drunkenness, greed, dishonesty, ambition and other sins, but it tends to overcome them. Can this be doubted? Take its most characteristic *precepts*—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul; and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Take its most characteristic *motives*—"Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your bodies and in your spirits, which are God's." "Walk worthy of the

vocation wherewith ye are called." "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Take its most characteristic *models*--"Let this mind be in you, Its models. which was also in Christ Jesus." "Such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners." "Be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Take its most characteristic *rewards*--"Blessed are the pure in Its rewards heart, for they shall see God." "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with me." "We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him." Take its grand *con-* Its finale. *summation*, the glorious result of all its efforts and achievements--"Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it, that He might . . . present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing." Who will dare to say that the essential tendency of such a system is not contrary to all vice and moral disorder; and that if Christianity does not succeed in this world in eradicating all sin, it is not because its tendency is defective, but because the antagonism it encounters both in the hearts of its own servants and in the world where it wages its warfare impedes and thwarts its beneficial intention?

But still, in opposition to all these explanations, it Explanations and apologies objected to is sometimes urged, that if Christianity were really

divine, it should not need all these apologies and explanations; it would have such a force about it as to preserve its own true character in spite of all contrary influences, to secure administrators of the proper spirit, to bear down opposition and antagonism of every kind, and to prevail far more decidedly over the devil and all his works. To have to speak of it apologetically, as has now been done, is to defend its goodness at the expense of its strength; as you sometimes say of a feeble brother, that he has good intentions but cannot carry them into effect.

Objection  
contrary to  
analogy.  
Truth.

Righteous-  
ness.

Freedom.

Is this a just objection? We affirm that it is contrary to all analogy. All truth is of Divine origin, but how slowly does truth prevail over error! Righteousness is of Divine origin; but what a warfare it has to wage, and how slowly it wins the day over injustice and selfishness! Freedom is of Divine origin; but what a painful, difficult, and tedious process has it been to vindicate its claims! It is not God's way to bear down all opposition to the good and the true, as a swollen river sweeps everything before it. Men are dealt with as reasonable and responsible beings; they are placed under probation in this matter; their power of choice is recognized; and they are permitted to offer that opposition to the claims of the Gospel which proves such a hindrance to its progress and rapid triumph. Secularism, with all its loud



claims, must confess that it finds it no easy thing to conquer the forces that are opposed to it.

The real question is not which system sweeps away everything that opposes the true progress of mankind, but which system is most effectual in grappling with these hindrances. Absolute triumph is not to be looked for, at least at the present stage ; the question is, where are the forces that do most and that promise best ? In a dark and disordered world, where is the power that does most to make the dark light, the crooked straight, and the rough places plain ? Who that fairly surveys the history of the world can fail to admit that Christianity is that power ?

The question is one of fitness.

Passing from these general views, let us now examine the special objections which modern secularism advances to the position that Christianity, more than any other force, tends to ameliorate and elevate human society, and let us weigh the claim which it makes on behalf of itself to much greater efficiency in this respect.

Special objections of Secularism.

The tone of secularism on this subject is loud and confident. It is here we find the attraction that is constantly presented in tracts, articles, speeches, and controversies, in order to draw into its ranks those who feel most keenly the defective arrangements of society at the present day. Society is out of joint, it says, and the poorer class are

Its confident appeal to the working man.

suffering grievously from its condition. No wonder ! Hitherto society has been moulded by Christianity, and Christianity teaches men to despise the present life, to count all its advantages as evil, and to accept as blessings all the ills and sorrows of time, not trying to lessen them, but waiting for a life to come where all will be put right.<sup>1</sup> Secularism, on the other hand, bestows all its attention on the present life, and strives with all its might to rectify the disorders which are so numerous and so glaring. Having come to see very clearly that all these disorders are due to one cause,—violation of the laws of nature, physical, moral, and social,—it proclaims with unbounded confidence that for every such evil there is just one remedy, but a remedy all-sufficient, viz., to find out and follow the laws of nature. It is the great aim of secularism to do

The one  
Secularist  
remedy for  
all disorder.

<sup>1</sup> “Christianity aims solely at preparing men for a future life, and it does this by teaching them to despise the advantages and the pleasures of the present life. It teaches men, as they say, not to look at the things which are seen, not to set their affections on things below ; and declares that those who love the world and the things of the world do not love God and cannot be saved. It represents riches, plenty, cheerfulness, and the good things and pleasures of the present life, as dangerous, as enemies to the soul. It pronounces woes on those who are rich and full, and those who laugh, and represents a jest and an idle word as exposing a man to damnation. Afflictions, want, pain, reproach, persecution, etc., that the men of the world regard as calamities, it represents as blessings, not joyous for the present, but calculated to yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness afterwards.”—*Secular Tracts*, No. 1.

this, and the more that it can induce men, especially the toiling multitude, to abandon the guidance of Christianity, and accept that which it offers in its stead, the speedier will be the advent of a well-ordered world, where peace and plenty, happiness and prosperity will reign among the children of men. Secularism has its millennium, and that will come when men have learned to give universal obedience to the laws of nature.<sup>1</sup>

In its attack on Christianity, as bearing on the elevation of society, secularism does two things: I. It denies that the *principles* of Christianity are adapted to social improvement, and maintains that they tend to social disorganization and ruin, while the principles of secularism are perfectly adapted to the good of man. II. It denies that the *facts* usually pointed to as showing the good results of Christianity, bear out that conclusion,—any good of that kind that Christianity has appeared to accomplish being due not to itself, but to secular principles which it has unconsciously accepted.

Two main points in the secularist attack.

<sup>1</sup> Secularists “believe all nature to be governed by fixed laws, in conformity to which our well-being depends. To teach men to understand and obey these laws is therefore the great aim of all their efforts, both in educating the young and addressing adults. It is hardly necessary to add, that their objects and principles are directly opposed to those of Christianity.”—*Secular Tracts*, No. 1.

## Principles.

## I.—PRINCIPLES.

Alleged  
principles of  
Christianity  
objected to.

The *alleged* principles of Christianity which secularism condemns as of pernicious influence are mainly these: (1.) Christianity despises this life, counts poverty a virtue and wealth a sin, rebukes the spirit that thinks of to-morrow, and thus cuts at the very root of all social improvement and comfort.<sup>1</sup> (2.) It encourages men to succumb to injustice, to take no steps for the protection of their property or their persons; when one smites them on the one cheek they are to turn to him the other also, and when one would rob them of their coat, they are to let him have their cloak likewise.<sup>2</sup> (3.) The great motive which Christianity urges for doing right is the fear of hell on the one hand, and the hope of a future reward on the other; a motive which appeals to nothing higher than selfishness, and which even if

<sup>1</sup> "Christians in this island must take no thought for the morrow. Economy and a desire for the future of this world must be entirely ignored. It would be a crime to establish post-office savings banks, inasmuch as laying up treasures on earth is strictly forbidden."—*Christianity, its Nature and Influence on Civilization*. By Charles Watts.

<sup>2</sup> "If an enemy is cruel enough to invade this Christian island, the inhabitants dare not interfere because Christ told them to resist not evil." "Christians clearly and emphatically teach submission to physical evil, tyranny, and oppression."—*Ibid.*

it were more effectual than it is, cannot develop anything of a high and noble order,—cannot make men brave, generous, and truly good.<sup>1</sup> (4.) Christianity compels men to receive truth on mere authority; they are to believe just what they are told, neither more nor less; in this way reason is superseded, all free thought and inquiry is repressed, and the soul becomes a mere machine, with a slow, hard, grinding movement, instead of a living being, soaring gracefully in the regions of light, welcoming every truth which is disclosed to it, and shaping its life in harmony with all that is good and true.<sup>2</sup>

Alleged  
principles of  
Christianity  
objected to.

<sup>1</sup> “If you feel no motive to common morality but from fear of a criminal bar in heaven, you are decidedly a man for the police on earth to keep their eye upon, since it is matter of world-old experience that fear of distant consequences is a very insufficient barrier against the rush of immediate desire. Fear of consequences is only one form of egoism which will hardly stand against a dozen other forms of egoism bearing down upon it.”—*Westminster Review*.

<sup>2</sup> “What stimulant did Christ give to think freely when He said, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me. . . If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned?’ Is there any incentive to impartial investigation in the gloomy words, ‘He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned?’ Once establish among mankind the erroneous notion that truth is confined to one particular channel, and that those who do not go in that direction are to be cast forth as a withered branch, and then the impossibility of unfettered thought will be immediately apparent.”—





Christianity  
said to  
despise the  
present life.

Sermon on  
the Mount.

True  
interpreta-  
tion of the  
sermon.

(1.) The objection to Christianity as teaching men to despise the present life, and as representing poverty a virtue and wealth a sin, is founded on well-known sayings of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount and elsewhere. "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of heaven. Woe unto you that are rich, for ye have received your consolation." "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of heaven . . . It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven." It is, however, maintained by secularists that these views were confined to the Founder of Christianity, and that they have been repudiated by the great body of His followers. The truth is, that Christians generally have interpreted Christ's words in a relative sense, not as condemning absolutely all regard for property, or all concern for the morrow, but as condemning that idolatrous and mischievous use of property which puts it in the place of God, giving it the first place in the heart, and that cankering anxiety for the morrow which makes no account of His fatherly care and love. That this

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*Free Thought and Modern Progress.* By Charles Watts. "The Bible is no authority to Secularists. The will of God, as the clergy call it, in their eyes is mere arbitrary, capricious, dogmatical assumption ; sometimes indeed wise precept, but oftener a cloak for knavery and a pretext for dogmatism."—G. J. Holyoake, *Principles of Secularism*.

is the true view to be taken of Christ's words is proved by many considerations; it is in harmony with the wise, sensible, unexaggerating tone of His teaching generally; it is in harmony with Old Testament teaching, which Christ came not to destroy but to fulfil, especially that of Moses and Solomon, by whom every encouragement was given to the people to practise thrift and industry, and to exercise a becoming forethought; it is in harmony with other parts of Christ's teaching and other actions of His life; for, on the one hand, He did not require rich men like Zaccheus and Nicodemus to part with their wealth, nor did He charge the woman with the alabaster box with cheating the poor. On the other hand, in His parable of the talents, and in other parables, He recognized the duty of industry and the benefit of thrift.

The condemnation passed on Christ is really a condemnation for the use of a mode of expression well understood in the East, which, to give emphasis to a point, substitutes the absolute for the comparative. Who could imagine that Christ meant to enjoin it as a duty absolutely to hate our father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and our own life also, if we would be His disciples? <sup>1</sup> To interpret this passage thus would be to make Christ guilty of extreme and unaccountable

Our Lord's  
use of  
Orientalisms

<sup>1</sup> Luke xiv. 26.

His con-  
demnation  
of avarice.

self-contradiction. The true shade of idea is given by Himself in Matt. x. 37, "He that loveth father or mother *more than Me.*" Is He then to be condemned for warning men by a strong Oriental idiom against the worship of money? Has that passion been so harmless, has it caused so little of the disorder and miseries of the world as to deserve to be passed lightly by? Have the sorrows and sufferings of the poor been so little due to the greed and ambition of the rich? Have the devourers of widows' houses, and those who have withheld from their labourers their hire, been so rare or unknown in the world's history that no emphatic blast of the trumpet behoved to be given against them? Who will venture to say so? What true friend of the labouring multitude can fail to be grateful to Christ for having raised His voice so loudly against that greed of gold which has so often proved a double curse—a curse to those from whose sinews the gold has been wrung, and a curse to those whom it has bloated and pampered? If He showed in strong terms that the blessings of the kingdom usually lie much nearer the path of the poor than that of the rich, is He to be discredited for that reason, especially among those who eat their bread in the sweat of their face?

Christianity  
alleged to be  
indifferent  
to temporal  
wrongs.

(2.) It is on the same misinterpretation of the spirit of Christ's words that the objection is founded, that Christianity requires men to succumb



to all the evils of life, to be uniformly meek, patient, and longsuffering,—never resisting evil, and never denouncing wrong. Here again it is alleged that Christians have usually repudiated this injunction, and especially that Paul, instead of resembling Christ in this respect, was a contrast to him. “The Christianity of Paul,” it is said, “was widely different from that of his ‘Divine Master.’ The character of Christ was submissive and servile; Paul’s was defiant and pugnacious. We could no more conceive Christ fighting with wild beasts at Ephesus, than we could suppose Paul submitting without protest or resistance to those insults and indignities which are alleged to have been heaped upon Christ.”<sup>1</sup> The writer of these words, with a mind darkened by prejudice, may not have been able to conceive of Paul manifesting the meek spirit of his Master; but no such difficulty will embarrass those who read his words,—“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath. . . . Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head” (Rom. xii. 19, 20).

Paul and  
Christ.

As to the alleged servility of Christ’s spirit, it will occur to most men that there was little indeed of that shown when again and again He resisted the devil in the wilderness; or when He made

Alleged  
servility of  
Christ’s  
spirit.

<sup>1</sup> Watts, *Christianity, its relation to Civilization*, p. 6.

His whip of small cords, and drove the traders from the temple ; or when before the multitude and His disciples, He rebuked the hypocrisy of the scribes and pharisees, and in words of scathing reprobation denounced the men that devoured widows' houses and for a pretence made long prayers. It is strange how little the witnesses against Christ agree among themselves in our day, any more than they did in His. At the very time when the secularist is accusing Christ of submission and servility, Renan proclaims that He had carried the denunciation of His opponents to such a height as to make the country too hot for Him, so that He actually welcomed the cross as a deliverance from complications that could not longer be borne ! It is not easy to describe the holy instinct that taught Christ when to submit and when to denounce, but the records of His life show that He Himself knew well the proper time for each, and that He was equally at home as the lion and the lamb—whether He was called to denounce the tyranny of the rulers, or to stand as a sheep dumb before its shearers. The same spirit of combined courage and meekness was shown by Stephen, when he arraigned so boldly the impiety of the nation, and then surrendered his life so touchingly with prayer for his murderers. Who shall say that in any essential respect Paul was different ? The combination of qualities is rare and heavenly,

Renan and  
secularism  
contradict  
each other.

Combination  
of courage  
and meek-  
ness in  
Christ.

And in  
Stephen.

not likely to be comprehended by those who on principle fix their gaze only on the things of earth. But this we may safely say, and history will bear us out, that the best and bravest of those who have stood up against the oppressor and defied his force and fury, have derived no small share of their courage from the words and the example of Him who said to His disciples—"Fear not them that kill the body;" while, at the same time, the best and meekest of the martyrs, manifesting the sublimity of patience in dismal dungeons and at the fiery stake, have been no less indebted to the influence and example of Him "who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered He threatened not, but committed himself to Him who judgeth righteously."

Christianity  
combines  
opposite  
qualities.

(3.) But again it is represented that the great motive furnished by Christianity for doing right is the fear of hell on the one hand, and the hope of a reward in heaven on the other. It is said that Christianity teaches us to regulate our whole conduct by a regard to our interests in the world to come. We are not to sin, because if we do we shall suffer for it in hell. We are to do the will of God, whatever it may be, in this life, because if we do we shall get a prize for doing it in heaven. Christianity, in short, is nothing but an appeal to our fears on the one hand, and our greed on the other; it is a system of threats and bribes; its

Alleged  
appeal of  
Christianity  
to inferior  
part of our  
nature.

motives in themselves are mean and ignoble, and in their influence they can have but little good effect. To illustrate their want of power the saying of one of the worst criminals in England, who ended his life on the gallows (Dick Turpin), is sometimes quoted, that he believed both in God and the devil, and did not care a straw for either. He had not even the faith of the devils, who believe and tremble.

Twofold  
answer.

The answer to this representation is twofold: First, that the appeal which Christianity does make to the fears and hopes of men in regard to their future welfare is thoroughly right; and second, that it is a miserable misrepresentation to say that this appeal constitutes the sole or the chief means by which it seeks to persuade them to a holy course of life.

Place due to  
hopes and  
fears.

To say that you are not in any way to rouse the fears and the hopes of men in regard to the future would be simply absurd. Christianity appeals to our whole nature, and surely both hope and fear are integral parts of that nature. For what purpose are our fears and hopes given us if they are not to move us when our welfare, and it may be our eternal welfare, is concerned? In the state of mind in which men are when the first appeals of Christianity are made to them, their hopes and fears in reference to the future life as contrasted with the present, are almost the only channels

At the  
beginning of  
spiritual  
history

through which they may be arrested, and shaken out of their sleepy indifference to all spiritual things. It is only a beginning that is made through such hopes and fears; but great preachers do not scruple to make this beginning. When John the Baptist saw the Sadducees come to his baptism he said, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus urged men to cut off their right hand when it caused them to offend, rather than allow their whole body to be cast into hell.

But what critic, desiring to convey a fair impression of the motives appealed to in the Sermon on the Mount, would ever say that they were connected with the lower part of our nature? "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;"—is not the appeal here to something infinitely higher than dread of pain or greed of possession? Or let us consider the first words of the Lord's prayer: "Our Father, which art in heaven;" is that an appeal to selfishness? Or was it a low selfish feeling, to be gratified hereafter, that our Lord addressed, when, bidding His followers consider the ravens and the lilies, He called them to filial trust in the love of the Father who cared for them? No gospel precept is more assailed by secularists than this, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all

Higher  
ground  
assumed.



these things shall be added unto you." Does that mean that we are to be careless of all that tends to our material good in this life, and that if we are, we shall be rewarded with abundance of it in the future? Has it not an infinitely loftier meaning? That the attainment of righteousness, goodness,—every holy principle and habit, is far more valuable than of earthly property; and that if the first place in our hearts be given to these, we need never dread, either here or hereafter, that we shall be left empty of other things.

Christ's fellowship enlarges and elevates the soul.

Men are not long in the company of Christ before their nature is expanded and purified, and desires arise in their hearts that no amount of earthly good, here or hereafter, could ever satisfy. The idea of a heaven of sensual pleasure is the grovelling imagination of the Mahometan. Hardly less carnal is the conception of a heaven consisting of an unlimited supply of what are called "the good things" of this life. How infinitely beyond such vulgar lines have all the men and women risen who have become eminent in the Church for the purity of their devotion, the consistency of their character, or the warmth of their untiring philanthropy!

George Eliot on worldliness and other-worldliness.

Some years ago an article appeared in the *Westminster Review* entitled "Worldliness and Other-Worldliness," now known to have been written by Miss Marian Evans, the distinguished

George Eliot of literature.<sup>1</sup> It is a somewhat trenchant and even bitter criticism of the poet Young, the author of *Night-Thoughts*, both as a poet and a religious man. What rouses her feeling against Young is the sharp antithesis he is charged with drawing between this world and the next, and the belief he seems to hold very strongly, that the great foundation of morality in this life is the doctrine of retribution in that which is to come. No doubt Young exposes himself in some degree to criticism, but the critic runs to the opposite extreme. George Eliot affirms strongly that in point of fact men are very little influenced by the fear of a distant retribution. Where there is a fierce passion at work, the distant future will be little thought of,—will be no restraint on the passion; and as to acts of goodness, if there be not a love of goodness in the heart, the mere hope of reward will not produce such acts. Or if it should, they would be mere selfish acts, performed from a selfish motive, and therefore not acts of goodness at all. Inherent regard to what is right and true, and genuine sympathy with our fellow-men, are, in this writer's view, far more efficient motives to goodness than regard to our own interests in a coming life. She goes so far as to say that "it is conceivable that

George Eliot  
on worldli-  
ness and  
other  
worldliness

Young's  
*Night  
Thoughts.*

Best moral  
influence.

<sup>1</sup> Since this Tract was first published, the authorship of the article has been avowed, both in *George Eliot's Life*, and in a volume of her *Essays*, where it stands first in order.



in some minds the deep pathos lying in the thought of human mortality—that we are here for a little while and then vanish away, that this earthly life is all that is given to our loved ones, and to our many suffering fellow-men, lies nearer the fountains of moral emotion than the conception of extended existence.”

Influence of  
future  
retribution.

There are several positions here liable to remark. The first is, that in point of fact, men are little influenced by the dread of retribution in a life to come. Is this an enlightened view of human motive, as shown in history? Is it the doctrine of the Greek tragedians, of Dante, of Shakespeare? Why should “conscience make cowards of us all,” if the doctrine of future retribution is so impotent? Take away the doctrine of retribution in a future life from Shakespeare, and would you not strip him of one great element of his strength?

Sympathy  
and love of  
goodness  
stronger  
forces.

Another position is, that inherent love of goodness and genuine sympathy for our fellow-men are much more powerful motives to the doing of what is right than either the fear of punishment or the hope of reward in the life to come. Undoubtedly they are; but the two classes of motives do not exclude one another, and both of them have their place in the Christian heart. It is a more relevant question, How are you to get men inspired with pure love of goodness and tender human sympathy? We affirm that this is a part of Christian education,

But how are  
they to be  
produced?

and that, whatever may be true in exceptional cases, it is only under the teaching and influences of the Gospel, in the case of mankind generally, that this spirit can be formed. Is not the formation of this spirit one of the highest aims of Christianity? What are we to make of the eulogy of charity in the 13th chapter of 1st Corinthians? Or of this earnest word to the Philippians: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue and if there be any praise, think on these things." What more powerful motive can be furnished to tender human sympathy than the example of Christ? Where was it ever more touchingly instilled than in the parable—"I was a stranger, and ye took Me in"? Or where, among the children of men, was there ever a more beautiful development of this spirit than in the great heart of the Apostle Paul?

Christian provision for producing them.

But the most questionable position in George Eliot's statement has yet to be noticed. She conceives that, in some cases, the pathos of human life is more moving, has more power over our hearts, when death is conceived of as ending all, than when there is the thought of a life to come. Does this mean that men are moved to more sympathy with their fellows, and to greater efforts to

Mortality or immortality  
—which  
rouses  
sympathy  
most?

Experience  
at French  
Revolution.

help them, when they think of them as having no hereafter, than when they think of them as immortal beings? In that case, one of the tenderest periods of human history should have been the period of the French Revolution, when death was voted "an eternal sleep." Was human life regarded then with exceptional feelings of sanctity, when each morning furnished its new batch of victims for the guillotine? If it be said that at that time fierce passions were too much roused for men to act according to their nature, we may turn our attention to another scene. When Dr. Livingstone was trying to establish Christian missions in the Transvaal, for the benefit of the natives, he was bitterly opposed by certain Boers, and one reason for their opposition to his missions and of their general treatment of the negroes was that in their view they had not souls. Did the thought that "death ends all" to the negro fill the heart of the Boer with a more tender sympathy for him? If seizing his cattle, making slaves of his children, compelling him to work without remuneration, and sending him into battle in front of the white man to receive the charge of the enemy, be proofs of such sympathy, undoubtedly the negro received them without stint. Most men, however, would be inclined to think that the sympathy of Dr. Livingstone was of a healthier order, when he gave his life with such unwearied devotion to the cause of

Experience  
of Living-  
stone,—  
Africa.

the Africans, strove to enlist the civilized world on their side, proclaimed to them the story of God's love in Christ, and by the example of the heavenly Father tried to engage them to behave to one another as brethren.<sup>1</sup> Whatever may be true of the "some minds" that, according to George Eliot, are so moved to sympathy for their fellows by the thought that there is no hereafter, it is certain that with the mass the effect is quite the opposite; that sympathy and the desire to help are intensely quickened by the thought of the eternal future, and that the lives and interests of the feebler classes would have but little consideration from the stronger if it were the common belief that they pass away into forgetfulness like the beasts that perish.

(4.) The fourth objection of Secularism to Christianity is, that it subjects us to a hard authority in our belief and practice; it puts reason in fetters, checks all freedom of movement, and prevents the soul from welcoming truth, and from shaping its life in harmony with what is simply good and true. It compels us to pay strict regard to what it calls the will of God, both in what we believe and in what we do. We may see strong reasons for believing or for doing what is different from this will of God; but be the reasons ever so

Alleged  
imposition  
by Chris-  
tianity of a  
hard  
authority on  
the soul.

<sup>1</sup> See *Personal Life of David Livingstone*, pp. 80, 90, etc.

powerful, it is impious to give effect to them ; there is nothing for us but blind submission to a will which we dare not question.

Authority in  
other  
spheres.

There is probably no piece of modern poetry that has been more admired than Tennyson's *Charge of the Light Brigade*, and no lines that have been regarded as happier, or bringing out more vividly the sublimity of the occasion, than these :—

“ ‘Forward the Light Brigade !’  
Was there a man dismay’d ?  
Not though the soldier knew  
Some one had blundered :  
Their’s not to make reply,  
Their’s not to reason why,  
Their’s but to do and die !  
Into the Valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred.”

Yet what was this but a case of entire surrender to another will, blind submission to hard authority ? Will men allow that there may be occasions when submission to a human will is not only right but noble, but question, nay deny the duty of such submission to the revealed will of God ?

Secularists  
themselves  
recognize a  
hard  
authority.

That secularists and other sceptics should deny that the Bible is the supernatural revelation of God’s will to man on matters of faith and practice, and should refuse it all claim to authority, is consistent enough, though, in our view, utterly wrong ; but that they should reprove Christians for rendering submission to what they believe to be the Divine will, or represent such submission as a poor super-



stition and miserable bondage, is inconsistent and ridiculous. The fact is that they themselves act in the very same way towards what they believe to be the supreme authority in the world. What they hold to be the supreme authority is the laws of nature, and to these laws they maintain that implicit obedience is due.<sup>1</sup> Men must conform themselves to the laws of physiology, nay, they must even accept the laws of hereditary disease, however hard and unreasonable it may be that through these laws their lives should be endangered by the ignorance of their forefathers or the carelessness of their neighbours. Now, why do secularists make it "the great aim of all their efforts to understand and obey the laws of nature?" Because they believe this course to be on the whole most salutary and advantageous for human beings, most conducive to the prosperity of human life.

This being the case, is it unreasonable for Christians to have a similar belief in the excellence of *their* supreme authority,—the will of God? Is it not natural that since God is a perfect Being, infinitely wise and infinitely good, His will should be regarded as identical with what is best and highest for man? Now, the Scriptures are to the Christian the revelation of the will of God. In accepting the Scriptures as his authority, he

The  
authority  
of God  
represents  
all that is  
good and  
perfect.

<sup>1</sup> See Note quoted at p. 17.

Analogy  
between laws  
of nature  
and laws of  
revelation.

believes that they express in summary form that wise and holy will which is the surest guide to all prosperity and blessing. The Christian does not reject the laws of nature, but he accepts over and above the law of revelation. He conforms to the laws of nature because they require what is most beneficial to his material welfare; he obeys the laws of revelation because they require what is most beneficial to his moral and spiritual well-being. Are we to be blamed and ridiculed because we obey the one as implicitly as the other? The will of God expressed in revelation may *seem* to us not fitted to its end, just as the laws of nature sometimes appear not fitted to their end, when they bear hard on human life and welfare; but just as, in the latter case, we may be sure that, on a wider view, they are the best laws that can be given, so in the former we may rest assured that the goodness and wisdom of God are capable of the fullest vindication. We say again, that if men choose to deny Revelation, they are consistent in finding fault with the Bible; but if they charge those with dishonouring their reason who bow to the authority of God in the Bible, they are as inconsistent as if they should charge their own friends with dishonouring their reason for accepting the authority of the laws of nature.

Sphere of  
reason in  
regard to  
nature and  
revelation  
analogous.

To determine the boundaries of reason and revelation is a somewhat delicate matter, and we



will not attempt the problem here. We will merely note the analogy between the spheres of nature and revelation. In nature, reason is called to investigate, to verify, to compare, to arrange phenomena, and to draw conclusions corresponding to them; but reason must not alter or modify phenomena, nor draw any conclusions which they do not warrant. In revelation, reason is called to read, verify, explain, compare, and systematize the contents of the record, but not to alter or modify any. In both cases, reason is *minister et interpres*—a servant and an interpreter; in neither case must reason be a judge.

Having thus vindicated the principles of Christianity in their bearing on the welfare and progress of the human family, let us now examine the principles of secularism, and inquire whether they are adequate to the end in view.

Principles of  
Secularism.

It is well known that secularists are not agreed among themselves as to whether atheism is an essential element of secularism. Mr. Bradlaugh has led the party that maintain that it is; Mr. Holyoake has taught that it is not. Atheism is at the foundation of Mr. Bradlaugh's paper, the *National Reformer*.

Place of  
Atheism and  
Secularism  
—difference  
among  
secularists.

According to Mr. Bradlaugh, all religion has a

Mr. Brad-  
laugh's  
atheism.

All religion  
pernicious.

pernicious influence on human welfare and progress. Religion is superstition, it encourages reliance on false methods, it creates confusion, it perverts the mind, and draws it mischievously away from the true lines of improvement.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Bradlaugh's secularism, therefore, not only makes no use of any religious view, but holds it to be only evil, and that continually. To believe in a holy Father, who guides and strengthens His children to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God; in a gracious Saviour, who gave Himself for us to redeem and purify us, and alike by precept and example taught us that the servant of all, the man who does most for the good of the world, is the greatest of all; and in a Holy Spirit, whose office it is to convert the soul, turn the wilderness into a garden, and prepare men for a blessed life where there shall be none to hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain: such faith is the most pernicious enemy to the cause of human welfare and the civilization of the world. The self-restraint

<sup>1</sup> "There is another point that I do not think I need trouble to discuss—whether secularism is atheism or not, because I think it is. I have always said so, I believe, for the last thirteen years of my life, whenever I have had an opportunity of doing so."—*Mr. Bradlaugh, in debate with Mr. Harrison*. "I am, too, an atheist, and I hold that the logical and ultimate consequence of adopting secularism must be atheism."—*National Reformer*, Oct. 16, 1881. On the other hand, "There are many secularists who disagree with me. . . . Clearly all secularists are not atheists."—*Debate with the Rev. J. M'Cann, D.D.*

and devotion to duty that come from the sense of a Divine eye upon us; the inspiration for the work of faith and labour of love springing from fellowship with a Divine Brother who loved us and gave Himself for us; the hope darted into our soul in moments of despondency by the thought of a Divine Spirit brooding over the moral chaos of this world, and by many diverse instruments slowly but surely working out the new creation—all this is to be remorselessly discarded. If we will but believe it, the voice of man is loud enough to still the winds and the waves; the arm of man is strong enough to subdue all the powers of evil; every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low; the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain, and the glory of man shall be revealed, to the confusion of all who dream that there is a God in heaven, and who refuse to serve the god of this world, or to bow down before the golden image which atheistic secularism has set up.

Man can  
and must do  
all.

As advocated by Mr. G. J. Holyoake, secularism does not deny the existence of a God, nor denounce religion absolutely. It maintains, however, that it is not by religion that the social welfare of humanity is to be advanced. The welfare of man in this world is a thing by itself, and is to be promoted solely by secular means.<sup>1</sup> The main attention

Mr. Holy-  
oake's place  
for religion.

<sup>1</sup> "If we are told to 'fear God and keep His commandments,'

of all men should be given to the things of the present life. The aim of men in this world should be to seek their own highest good, and the highest good of their family, their country, and their race. True good is that which is in accordance with the laws of nature, especially physiology; and evil is that which contradicts these laws. Duty is synonymous with ascertained utility to the greatest number; for Providence, secularism substitutes science; for prayer, prudence and well-directed labour; for the worship of God, the service of man; for faith, knowledge; for submission to authority, reverence for truth; and for religion, all the pleasures of domestic and social life.

Professor  
Flint's  
*Antitheistic  
Theories.*

Some of these positions of secularism have been very ably discussed by Professor Flint in his *Antitheistic Theories*, especially the three following:

1. That precedence should be given to the duties of this life over those which pertain to another.

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lest His judgments overtake us, the indirect action of this doctrine on human character may make a vicious timid man better in this life, supposing the interpretation of the will of God, and the commandments selected to be enforced, are moral; but such teaching is not secular, because its main object is to fit men for eternity. Pure secular principles have for their object to fit men for time, making the fulfilment of human duty here the standard of fitness for any accruing future. *Secularism purposes to regulate human affairs by considerations purely human.*"—*Principles of Secularism*, by George J. Holyoake.

2. That science is the providence of man, and that absolute spiritual dependency may involve material destruction.

Three  
secular  
positions.

3. That man has an adequate rule of life independently of belief in God, immortality, or revelation.

In reply to the first of these positions, Dr. Flint shows that of all the counsels that men need to have pressed on them, surely the last is to attend more to this life and less to the future—the very course to which most men are already much too prone; that the distinction between the two sets of duties is unfounded, for if there be a God, duty to Him is a duty of this life; and if there be a future world, it is our present duty to take heed of the fact; nor can anything but evil come to any good cause from disregarding the eternal mercy and justice of God. M. Pasteur lately conveyed the same thought in the French Academy, when he charged Positivism with failing to take account of the most important of all positive notions—that of the Infinite. In reply to the second position, Dr. Flint shows that it is a mistake to oppose providence and prayer to science, for we honour science as much as secularists, and yet we believe both in providence and prayer as harmonizing with science; and as to science becoming a substitute for providence, the idea is absurd, inasmuch as

First secular  
position.

Second  
secular  
position.



Third  
secular  
position.

science—the science of gunnery, for example—may be directed to purposes of destruction; unless science be directed by goodness, it is nothing. In reply to the third, he admits that there is in our nature a sense of morality, a sense of right and wrong, apart from religion. But morality can have no valid obligation, unless there be a God who enforces and who administers the moral law. Moreover, it is religion that gives sanction and inspiration to morality. “One glance of God,” says Archbishop Leighton, “a touch of His love, will free and enlarge the heart, so that it can deny all, and part with all, and make an entire renunciation of all, to follow Him.” The alliance of secularism with utilitarianism in morals is regarded rather as a weakness than a benefit to secularism. The mass of people cannot enter into the speculative labyrinth to which this question leads. And if the reason why we are to do our duty is only because it is on the whole our interest to do it, we may well ask why should we do any act which would involve sacrifice,—why should we sacrifice our interest to the interest of others? The very definition of morality which secularism adopts seems to be fatal to all noble and self-sacrificing action.

Religion  
necessary to  
morality.

In the same line we offer two observations :

Dynamic  
power  
wanting.

1. Secularism makes very light of *the dynamic power* which is to propel men to act in the way



most conducive to their own true welfare and the welfare of the community. In one of the *Secular Tracts* to which we have referred, the expectation is confidently expressed that "bringing men to an acquaintance with the facts of physiology and general science will gradually annihilate drunkenness, licentiousness, excessive indulgences, prostitution, and intemperance of all kinds." This expresses correctly the general drift of secular teaching. The world is an ignorant world; enlighten it, and it will become good.

Great trust  
in knowledge  
of  
physiology

Now, apart from all questions of theology, we ask, Is this notion founded on a true view of human nature? Is there nothing in the old pagan maxim, "Video meliora, proboque; deteriora sequor;" or, in the words of the Christian Apostle, "The good that I would I do not; but the evil that I would not, that I do." Has the simple enlightening of men's understandings ever been found enough to turn them from evil ways? Has mere light such a power to subdue the fever of lust, to restrain the drunkard's thirst, to humble the ambition of the conqueror, to bridle the greed of the miser, that nothing else is required? Who does not know that the giant enemy of society is selfishness, and till that spirit is cast out, society can never be either prosperous or happy? And how are secularists to cast him out? They are to show men that while a lower selfishness may incline them to disorderly

This trust  
opposed to  
human  
nature.

ways, a higher selfishness, a wiser regard to their true interest, will make them reverse their action. Thus selfishness is to be cast out by selfishness in another form. Unfortunately, this way of casting out Satan has never proved a very successful process. A much higher dynamic is needed.

The  
Christian  
dynamic.

Now, of all that is grand in Christianity, nothing excels its moral dynamic. Talk of the enthusiasm of humanity, it is a mere idea. But the enthusiasm of Christian love is a mighty power. The enthusiasm of hearts arrested by the mighty love of Christ, drawn into sympathy with Him, reflecting on their fellow-sinners the compassion that has embraced themselves, seeing in this disordered world a blessed sphere of service to God and man, and throwing their energies into the work of blessing it—that is a wonder-working power! It goes on unweariedly in the work of faith and labour of love; never deeming that it has done enough, or that it can ever do enough for Him whose love has fallen on it so richly, and is so well fitted to bless the whole family of man.

Secularists  
rob Chris-  
tianity of  
some of its  
own  
principles.

2. Our second observation is that secularists are in the habit of doing Christianity a great injustice by denying to it the benefit of some of its own principles, and representing these as the property of secularism alone.

If the question concern the efficacy of prayer or the reality of Providence, it is assumed that

Christianity cannot recognize the uniformity of the laws of nature. If it concern some practical end to be gained, such as exemption from an epidemic, it is averred that Christianity trusts for this to prayer only, and makes no use of natural means. If in connexion with Christianity some human interest is found to be flourishing,—education, for example, or freedom,—that state of things is not due to Christianity proper, but to certain of the principles of secularism which it has for the nonce adopted! All this is unfair and even absurd.

We grant to secularists the credit of trying to make the most of the earthly conditions of human welfare. We allow that there has been some call for their exertions. When Socialism and Communism arose in France, labour was in a disorganized condition, and evils prevailed which undoubtedly there was need to reform. The Communists were not wholly wrong, but their methods were wild and impracticable. Secularists in certain respects desire to do good, they desire a more thorough recognition of the earthly conditions of human welfare, and in so far they are entitled to credit. But they are quite wrong in supposing that the religion of the Bible does not include and involve an enlightened regard to the conditions of human welfare. The actual Christian Church may often have overlooked much of this, but

Modicum of credit due to Secularism.

Error in representing Christianity indifferent to human interests.

undoubtedly it is in the Bible. In times of great spiritual awakening, the overwhelming importance of the unseen and eternal may have been so put as to make temporal considerations appear to be of no importance whatever; but certainly this is not the teaching of the Bible.

Human interests fully recognized in the Old Testament.

Palestine.

Paradise.

Book of Proverbs.

Everything that is good in secularism is in the Bible. What system could have been better adapted to develop the simple enjoyments of human life than that which was prescribed for the Jews in Palestine, when they dwelt under their vine and under their fig-tree, contented, happy, prosperous, as if in a very Arcadia? We may go further back than the days of the Jews in Palestine, back to the days of Adam and Eve; and in the arrangements of the happy garden we may see how carefully the requirements of the physical frame were provided for, and a life inaugurated in which full regard was had to material welfare as well as to spiritual fellowship and growth. Advance if you will to the sketch of the virtuous woman in the last chapter of Proverbs, seeking wool and flax, and working willingly with her hands; like the merchants' ships bringing the food from afar; considering a field and buying it; holding the distaff and laying her hands to the spindle; stretching out her hand to the poor, and reaching forth her hands to the needy; making herself coverings of tapestry, and clothing her household with scarlet: you see in her the model

woman of the Book, for "many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all."

Yet we are told that when in any way we contribute to the welfare of human life, we are borrowing the principles of secularism. We retort the charge, and maintain that any good that secularism does is done by principles which are found in the Bible. Where was secularism when the Book of Proverbs was written? The fundamental principle of that book is that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," and yet on that foundation a place is found for every real maxim of human wisdom. Thrift, economy, diligence, looking well to the flocks and the herds, have all a place in this book, which seeks above all things to extol the fear of the Lord.

'Borrowing  
the  
principles of  
Secularism.'

Does, then, the New Testament supersede the lessons of the Old? When St. Paul rebuked the busy-bodies at Thessalonica, and enacted the rule that if any would not work neither should they eat, it seemed very like going back to the Book of Proverbs. When St. James denounced the employers that robbed their workmen of their earnings, he seemed to echo the thunders of Isaiah or of Amos. The New Testament brings the future life more to the front; it shows more clearly and fully the need of redemption and regeneration, while it unfolds the provision made for these; and it urges more explicitly the infinite importance of our ever-

Doctrine of  
the New  
Testament  
as to this  
life.



lasting well-being. But it does not disparage the life that now is. What it is so eager to effect in regard to the present life is that it be used wisely as a training and preparation for the life to come. Most powerfully does it show how utterly it is thrown away and perverted, when it is regarded as complete in itself, when it is viewed in the light in which the secularist delights to place it. The world in its wrong place—the idol and treasure of the soul—is what the New Testament is so constantly reproving. But the New Testament carefully guards all the principles of human welfare; the body is to be kept in subjection, lest evil defile it, and to be honoured as the temple of the Holy Ghost; the bread we need for its sustenance is to be asked in the prayer that at the same time seeks the most spiritual blessings; the various social relations of this life, that of husband and wife, parent and child, master and servant, subject and ruler, baptized now into the spirit of Christ, are raised to a higher platform of obligation; while every attribute of human life, sin only excepted, is elevated and glorified by our relation to Him who being the Eternal Son of God, became by incarnation the Son of man.

Worldliness  
in the Bible  
sense.

Our earthly  
life elevated  
in the Bible.



## II.—FACTS.

Facts.

Passing now from the influence of Christianity and Secularism in their principles, we proceed to view the two systems in relation to the resulting facts. What, so far as can be ascertained, has been the outcome of each in practical life?

Outcome of the two systems.

Who are the heroes of secularism? Who are the benefactors of the world that have adorned its ranks? Who are its philanthropists and patriots? Where is their Valhalla, crowded with the portraits of the great and good?

The heroes of Secularism.

In reply to our challenge we get the names of some half a dozen men who bore imprisonment for blasphemy, early in the century, and helped the cause of liberty of speech; we are told of Robert Owen, the founder of New Lanark, and the first, it is said, to have advocated infant schools; perhaps we are told of Voltaire, and his gallant fight against the shameful persecution of Protestants; and of Girard, a rich merchant of Philadelphia, who left money for the magnificent Girard College. Mr. Bradlaugh, in his debate with Dr. M'Cann, besides referring to himself as the uniform and consistent advocate of every reform, tells of William Washington, a secularist miner, who volunteered to go down on a perilous mission

An obscure list.

after an explosion in a pit; and the name of John Stuart Mill usually brings up the rear. It cannot be said to be a very imposing list.

Comparison  
with  
Christianity.

It is not a very formidable rival to the Christian Valhalla. What name could Secularism ever dare to place beside the incomparable name of Jesus Christ? What influence could it venture to compare with that which we vaguely but significantly indicate as the spirit of Christ? Who can be matched with the Christian pioneers of British civilization, the Patricks and Columbas, the Cuthberts and Ninians, and, in another sphere of life, the Alfreds of our early history? Where shall we find women like Elizabeth of Hungary, or Catharine of Sienna? What names emit the aroma of Bernard of Clairvaux, Francis of Assisi, or Thomas à Kempis? If struggles for freedom be spoken of, what champions of human rights ever equalled in courage and in character the Eliots and Pymms and Hampdens of the seventeenth century? What fabric of liberty has proved so enduring as that which they helped to establish in England, and their like-minded countrymen, the Pilgrim Fathers, in America? If the reclaiming of barbarous nations be the topic, what has secularism got to match our modern missions, with names like those of Carey and Schwartz, Vanderkemp and Judson, Eliot and Zinzendorf, Williams and Moffat, Gutzlaff and Burns,

Pioneers of  
British  
civilization.

Holy  
women.

Holy men.

Champions  
of liberty.

Reclaiming  
savages.

Livingstone and Patteson, besides hosts of others that have become household words for devotion and self-sacrifice? If the slave has had to be rescued from unlawful bondage, who have toiled for him like Macaulay and Clarkson, William Wilberforce and Sir Fowell Buxton? If an atrocious jail-system has had to be reformed, and abuses corrected in Britain and the other countries of Europe the record of which now fills us with horror, what secularist ever flung himself into the work with the ardour and self-sacrifice of John Howard? If projects for the amelioration of humanity have been started, what can be set over against Pastor Fliedner's work at Kaiserswerth, or John Bost's enterprise at Laforce? What secularist ever did for humanity what was done for our great cities by Dr. Chalmers? Was Florence Nightingale a secularist, or Agnes Jones, or Sister Dora? The great temperance reformers, the men whose appeals go to the hearts of the multitude, and move them like the leaves of the forest, such as John Gough and Francis Murphy, are not secularists, but Christian men. The man who passed the Ten Hours' Act, who has identified himself so conspicuously with the Ragged and Reformatory movement, and with every scheme for the relief of toiling humanity, is no secularist, but the eminently Christian Earl of Shaftesbury. The very animals get benefit from Christian

Rescuing  
the slave.

Reform of  
prisons.

Relief of  
sufferings.

Work in  
great cities.

Nursing the  
sick.

Temperance  
reform.

Relief to the  
labourer.

And to the  
cattle.

Undistin-  
guished  
philanthro-  
pists.

Sunday-  
school  
teachers.

philanthropy, for the founder of the movement for cattle fountains and watering troughs was a Christian Friend, the late Samuel Gurney. The names which we have mentioned are stars of the first magnitude, shedding a glory over the firmament; but who does not know of scores of like-minded Christian men and women toiling more obscurely but not less earnestly in the crowded haunts of labour, opening coffee palaces, rearing cabmen's shelters, providing crèches, establishing schools, institutes, and classes, sparing no effort to do good where their services are needed among their fellows? What has secularism got to be compared to the great army of Sunday-school teachers, giving their service so readily and so freely for the Christian good of the young? True, it is but a small proportion of our Christian people who are actively engaged in such disinterested labour; but that is just because the mass of men are so slow to realize their responsibilities; beyond all doubt it is the duty of every Christian to labour for the good of others; it ought to be true of the whole Christian community that "no man liveth to himself."

Some strong-  
minded men  
may be  
found in any  
system.

No reasonable man will doubt that under any system a few strong-minded men may be found, able to resist the immediate influence of their system, and to stand forth as men of energy and courage, the friends and protectors of freedom. We

cheerfully admit that there have been such men in the ranks of secularism. But they are not representatives of a system. Take the case of Voltaire.

Voltaire.

The great writer of the eighteenth century had undoubtedly an active spirit of humanity. His service in the cause of the shamefully-oppressed Calas, and other victims of ecclesiastical tyranny, was a noble service. His efforts on behalf of Ferney were worthy of all praise; the buildings he erected, the industries he encouraged, were real services to mankind. But Voltaire was a man by himself—a man of marked individualism. And for every hundred that followed him in his sneers and jibes at religion, there was not one who adopted his spirit of humanity. Nor does Voltaire's general character serve to adorn his principles. His life was guided by a combined love of money, love of pleasure, and love of fame; he was eaten up with vanity; as a writer, he was cynical, sneering, lying, and most scurrilous and abusive, not taking the trouble to conceal his antipathies to what he believed to be Christianity, or to offer any apology for the unrestrained abuse he poured on its friends.

His service  
to humanity

His faults

Of Robert Owen we will say that he was one of those strong men who break away from the common ruts, and devise liberal things; but did not Owen find that his system was unworkable, and his house built on the sand? If he was an early advocate of infant schools, let him have

Robert  
Owen.





credit for it; but after all, what was this service to the cause of education compared with the splendid enterprise of John Knox, wrung in part from the unwilling hands of the Scottish nobility, which contemplated universities, high schools, parish schools—all that was needed for a good education alike for high and low?

A humble  
Christian  
school-  
master.

If personal effort is the true measure of a man's philanthropic spirit, we could more than match the achievements of Robert Owen with that of a humble Christian schoolmaster of the name of Davies, in an obscure district of Wales. Planting himself in a very destitute district, he not only established a school and acted as teacher of the young, with a salary of about £20, but he repaired a church, he established trade, he worked as a colporteur, he distributed Bibles and Christian books on a scale of wonderful liberality; and in his old age, when his good work was sufficiently established, he removed to an entirely new sphere to begin his philanthropic labour from the very foundation.<sup>1</sup> If the history of all the schools established in the British Empire were written, what an immense proportion of the great achievement would be found to be due to the devoted zeal of Christian men and women.

We have made mention of Scotland. That

<sup>1</sup> See a book entitled *James Davies, Schoolmaster of Devauden*, by Sir Thomas Phillips, 1850.



country gets hard measure from the secularists Its religion is "a gloomy nightmare."<sup>1</sup> According to Buckle, Scotland and Spain go together for ignorance and superstition. Whenever religion has been powerful, the people have been miserable, and "the noblest feelings of human nature have been replaced by the dictates of a servile and ignominious fear." But is it not a somewhat notable fact that in the battles for freedom and independence, Scotland has always borne so conspicuous a part? Is it not remarkable that her sons have gone over the world, and, to say the least, have not as a rule sunk into that condition of dull misery that might have been expected of a people reared under such an incubus? There is no country whose outward condition at the present day, in spite of faults and blemishes that are not denied, shows a more wonderful contrast to its condition before the Reformation, when it had neither agriculture nor commerce, industry nor art, learning nor science, and when the energies of its clans and nobles were spent in mutual destruction.

Scotland specially denounced by secularists.

The treatment which some of the greatest and noblest champions of English freedom receive at the hands of secularists is odd, and even amusing. "Our Eliots, our Hampdens, and our Cromwells, a couple of centuries ago, hewed with their broadswords a rough pathway for the people. But it

Champions of English freedom.

<sup>1</sup> Watts: *Christianity, its Nature and Influence on Secularism.*

Their  
alleged  
successors.

was reserved for the present century to complete the triumph which the Commonwealth began.”<sup>1</sup> And who do our readers suppose were the men that put the copestone on the edifice which the men of the seventeenth century began? Paine, Hone, Carlile, Williams, Hetherington, Watson; being the leading men who suffered prosecution for blasphemy, and the too free utterance of their religious sentiments in the beginning of this century. Verily, “the world knows nothing of its greatest men.” It is a pleasure to come upon unexpected wealth, but we fear we are so much under “the nightmare of superstition” as not to be elated by the discovery that the heroes of the seventeenth century have been eclipsed in modern days by so much greater men.

The St.  
Bartholo-  
mew men.

Again, we read that when, in 1662, the two thousand clergymen “resigned their benefices and gave up the national religion of the time because they could not submit to the pet doctrine of the Church, which was passive submission, they adopted the very basis of free-thought principles.”<sup>1</sup> But why not go back fully sixteen hundred years? When the apostles stood before the Jewish Council, declined the pet doctrine of passive submission, and declared that they must obey God rather than man, did they not, as much as the two thousand clergymen, adopt free-thought

<sup>1</sup> Watts: *Free Thought and Modern Progress.*

principles? Undoubtedly they did. But is not this a *reductio ad absurdum*? The apostles adopt free-thought principles! There is a world of difference between the conduct of the apostles, and that of freethinkers. It was not at the bidding of their own reason that the apostles declined the authority of man. It was at the bidding of God. Free thought declines the authority of other men at the call of reason; the apostles declined it at the call of God. The two thousand clergymen too believed that they were obeying God; and when His voice was heard commanding them, no other course was for a moment to be thought of.

Free-thought principles contrasted with Christian.

It is very important to observe to what an extent the conflict with the tyranny of the Stuart kings, which did so much to establish our liberties, was a religious conflict. The men that took a leading part in it had their consciences quickened, their nerves braced, and their imaginations roused by a sense of religion. However difficult the struggle, they took heart from the assurance that God was on their side. He was calling them to the battle—could they refuse His call? Their religion gave them a lofty sense of the value of the men whom the king was disposed to treat as nonentities—"dumb driven cattle." Who was Charles Stuart, or any man, that he should lord it over the consciences of men made in God's image, and possessing immortal souls? Who was any

Religious element in conflict with the Stuart tyranny.

earthly king that he should treat redeemed men as if they owed no allegiance to Him who had bought them with His blood? Was it to be tamely submitted to, that in this land the opportunity should be denied of working out, in accordance with God's will, that blessed scheme of spiritual renovation which Christ had established? Was the very Gospel of salvation to be put in fetters at the pleasure of an earthly king?

We do not say that these were the only considerations that nerved the arm of the champions of civil and ecclesiastical freedom in the seventeenth century. No doubt they were animated too by the instinctive recoil of Englishmen from tyranny, and the sturdy determination to resist it by every lawful means. No doubt they felt the stimulus of ancestral example, and would have thought it foul scorn to refuse the legacy of freedom's battle,—“bequeathed by bleeding sire to son.” But the religion which taught them to “fear God” and “honour all men” gave a new dignity to the struggle. It magnified the interests involved, it connected the battle with eternity, it mixed it up with the overwhelming value of the soul. Whether or not the struggle would have been an absolute failure but for these considerations it were hard to say; but this we know, that the battle was hot enough and long enough to require the full force of all the resources that could be mustered in the cause of freedom.

Other than  
religious  
motives.

A secularist has made the supposition of a company of men and women going to an uninhabited island, and there attempting to form a constitution to meet the requirements of modern society, based upon the teachings of the New Testament. And he has tried to show that any such attempt must end in ridiculous failure. Did the secularist not remember that the experiment had actually been tried? Did he never read the history of the *Mayflower* and the Pilgrim Fathers? That certainly was a community of men and women who went, not to a desert island, but to a desert continent, for no other purpose than to carry out in all their fulness the principles of the New Testament. Did the experiment end in disastrous failure? Is that marvel of modern history, the rise and progress of the United States, a proof of disastrous failure? In the very earnestness of their loyalty the Pilgrim Fathers committed some mistakes, and certainly no man would set up the United States as a faultless community; but undoubtedly that country would have had a different history but for them. These good men gave a tone to the new country which has stood it in good stead to the present day; under them, great and good principles acquired a vitality which has been a preserving salt to the nation amid the endless rush of heterogeneous elements which the tide of emigration has poured upon its shores.

Secularist  
supposition  
of a colony  
and its  
principles.

The  
experiment  
has been  
tried.

The Pilgrim  
Fathers.



Value to colonies of a religious basis.

It was an unspeakable boon to America that the foundations of its society were laid by men who did not go there to make fortunes, but to find freedom to serve God. Would that all the other colonies of Great Britain had been founded by men with similar principles! There are some of our colonies where the principles of secularism have had almost unlimited scope, for churches have been but slow to follow to gold-diggings and diamond-fields the hordes that have rushed to them for temporal gain. But where is the colonial paradise, that secularism, pure and simple, has established? If we ask for colonial pandemoniums that have grown up under its auspices, we are more likely to find an answer. The history of the Far West in America may tell a similar tale. It is ludicrous to think how "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" principle would fare, in raw, wild communities, where "every man for himself" is the order of the day. We should fancy that when the schoolmaster had taught the first moral lesson of secularism, that it is the duty of every man to aim at what he regards as his own greatest good, his scholars would think they had got enough, and would proceed to carry out the lesson very faithfully. If he should go on to teach next that it was their duty also to aim at the highest good of their country and their race, we can fancy them much more puzzled. In the first "standard," there would be no failures; but how many would pass the second?



In July, 1880, the present writer, being in America, chanced to see a number of the *New York Herald*, containing a remarkable letter with the signature of "Thurlow Weed." All Americans are familiar with the name of the octogenarian who some years ago was among the greatest and most conspicuous of American politicians. His letter, or, as the editor called it, "sermon," in the *Herald*, was not in his olden strain. It was occasioned by the public career of Colonel Ingersoll, the Bradlaugh of the United States. Colonel Ingersoll goes about the country delivering addresses against the Bible, and making men infidels. Mr. Weed's letter contained a comparison between the work of D. L. Moody and that of Mr. Ingersoll. Mr. Moody led men to think of the highest of all subjects; and while promoting their salvation, stimulated self-control, temperance, beneficence, and every other virtue. The line of his progress was marked by the reform of drunkards, the union of divided families, the consecration of young men's energies to nobler objects, the drying up of the sources of the world's misery, and the opening of fountains of benediction and prosperity. What could Ingersoll point to, to match such work? What drunkard had he reformed? what home had he made happy? what life had he rescued from selfishness, and made great and noble? The drift of Mr. Weed's letter was that, tried by its fruits, Christianity was infinitely

Testimony  
of Mr.  
Thurlow  
Weed to the  
influence of  
Christianity.

Comparison  
of Ingersoll  
and Moody

better than anything that Ingersoll could substitute for it. The letter was interesting not only as written by a man who in his old age had undergone a great spiritual change, but as presenting the view of a man of affairs, a man who knew human nature, and understood something of the forces by which men's lives are moulded. It showed that in the view of such men it is only the gospel of Christ that is the power of God unto salvation, both for the life that now is and that which is to come.

A Unitarian  
appeal and a  
waif's  
answer.

What is needed is the gospel, pure and simple, but large and wide-reaching, full of charity, faith, and sympathy, and proclaimed in simple reliance on the power of God. In a town in the north of Scotland, a benevolent Unitarian minister once took to preaching in the streets. He spoke of the beauty of goodness, and invited sinners to the happiness of a virtuous and orderly life. A group of waifs and harlots hovered near, one of whom, who had not lost all her mother-wit, replied to him in her native dialect—"Eh, man, your rap's nae lang eneuch for the like o' hiz" (your rope is not long enough for the like of us). His gospel was not capable of reaching down to the depths to which waifs and harlots had fallen. It was a longer rope, a profounder gospel, that was entrusted to the Apostle, when Christ sent him to the Gentiles, "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

His rope too  
short.

# AGNOSTICISM:

## *A DOCTRINE OF DESPAIR.*

BY THE

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## Analysis of the Tract

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THE purpose of the Tract is practical. It is intended to show the tendency of the really Atheistic Agnosticism so prevalent in the present day. It destroys hope for science, which cannot cast out God from its thinking. In interpreting facts, science is inevitably led into the very presence of a thinking God. Order in nature is best explained by a directing God, especially if the great law of evolution be accepted. Science anticipates greater discoveries than any yet made. Though it is not necessary for eminence in any special science, that any question should be raised as to the foundation of this hope, Christian theism is the best solution of all the problems raised by all the special sciences. The recognition of a personal intelligence, which all science accepts as possible and rational, gives an assured hope to science, and the denial of it takes its hope from science. A personal God is also necessary, in order to give energy and life to conscience. A redeeming God is necessary to give men hope of deliverance from sin and its consequences, and enable them to realize the moral ideal. All hope of this is cut off by Agnostic Atheism. The agnostic ideal is destitute of permanence. Without God's plans and purposes for human well-being, there is no rational ground of hope for man's future. The history of the past affords no hope for the future. Hope for the conduct of individual life in the present, and the certain attainment of another life hereafter, are dependent on faith in God. In as far as God is denied, hope of every kind is abandoned, and life loses its light and dignity, and becomes a worthless farce or a sad tragedy.

# AGNOSTICISM:

## A Doctrine of Despair.



THE descriptive phrase of the Apostle Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, "having no hope, and without God in the world," when condensed to its

Ephesians  
ii. 12.

utmost might be read thus: *Hopeless* because *Godless*. Each of these epithets is sufficiently significant when taken alone. When coupled together their force is more than doubled. To be Godless is to fail to acknowledge Him whom men naturally own. It is to refuse to worship the Creator and Father in heaven, whom all the right-minded and loyal-hearted instinctively reverence. It is to forsake God, and therefore to be *God-forsaken*, as the homely phrase is: that is, to be a man whom the sunshine warms with no heat and the rain blesses with no refreshment because in the wide world which God has made he finds no living and loving God. No wonder that such a man has no hope—that he is classed

What it is  
to be  
godless.

with those "to whom hope never comes that comes to all."

The negative  
condition of  
those  
referred to  
by St. Paul.

The condition of the persons referred to by St. Paul was simply negative. They are described as without God and without hope. Possibly they did not deny or disbelieve in God. They might have been so occupied with the world itself in its brightness and beauty, that God was absent from all their thinking. Possibly one or another might have had daring enough to say there is no God. Perhaps, though not probably, in those times, some of them held that God could not be known, and invested this dogma with a religious halo to which they responded with mystic wonder. But to them all there was no God, and with them all there was no hope. So wrote our apostle out of his fresh and vivid experience of the hope which had come to him from the new and vivid manifestation of God to himself, as revealed in the face of Jesus Christ—a hope which thrilled every fibre of his being with electric life. Since his time men in all generations have been transported with the same joyous hope. And just so often as God has been forgotten or denied has hope left the hearts and habitations of men. But in all these times, ignorance of God has been more commonly regarded as a calamity or a sin. In our days, as is well known, it comes to us in a new form. Ignorance of God is now taught as

The apostle's  
experience.

God-forget-  
fulness and  
hopelessness.



a necessity of reason. [The unknowableness of God has been formulated as a Philosophy. It has even been defended as a Theology and hallowed as a Religion. The sublimation of rational piety has been gravely set forth as that blind wonder which comes from the conscious and necessary ignorance of God. In contrast with this new form of worship, the confident joyousness of the Christian faith has been called "the impiety of the pious," and the old saying has almost reappeared in a new guise that even for a philosopher "ignorance is the mother of devotion."] Ignorance of God regarded as a necessity of reason.

I do not propose to argue concerning the truth or falsehood of these doctrines. I shall spend no time in discussing the logic or philosophy of the atheistic agnosticism which is somewhat currently taught and received at the present time. I shall simply treat of it in [its practical tendency as being destructive of hope in man, and therefore necessarily leading to the degradation of man's nature, and the lowering of his life.] Atheistic agnosticism degrading. I observe

I. *That without God there is no well-grounded hope for science.* No hope for science without God.

This may seem to be a very daring or a very paradoxical assertion. There is more truth in it, however, than appears at first sight. Inasmuch

Science  
cannot cast  
out God  
from its  
thought.

as it is in the name of science that ignorance of God is exalted into supreme wisdom, it may be worth while to inquire what the effect upon science would be, could it cast out God from all its thinking. I say *could it do this*, for it would be very hard for it to succeed should it try ever so earnestly. Our newly-fledged agnostics are apt to forget that all our modern science has been prosecuted in the broad and penetrating sunlight of faith in one living and personal God—that not a single theory has been proposed or experiment tried in nature, except with the distinct recognition of the truth that a wise and loving Mind at least *may* uphold and direct the goings-on of nature. The most passionate atheist cannot deny that this is the conviction of most of the living and breathing men about him. The most restrained agnostic cannot but know and feel that the theory which he strives to cherish is rejected by most of the women and children in Christendom who look up into the sky and walk upon the earth. The simple teachings of Christian theism are capable of being expanded into the grandest conceptions that science ever attempted to formulate—conceptions so grand that human reason is overwhelmed with their sublime relationships, and the human imagination is dazed to blindness when it would make them real. The first pre-

The  
capabilities  
of Christian  
theism.

position of the creed which the infant pronounces with confiding simplicity—"I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth"—is easily expanded into those conceptions that the man necessarily and intuitively accepts as the background upon which science traces all its formulæ and axioms, and by which it connects its theories and proceeds to its conclusions.

That science must have both faith and hope appears, whether we consider it as an *interpreter*, an *historian*, or a *prophet*. Science is first of all an *interpreter*. Though it begins with facts, it does not end with facts. Though it begins with the seen, it looks beneath the visible and strives after the invisible. So soon as it compares and explains, it connects phenomena and interprets events by forces and laws, by hypotheses and theories. Let it test its theories by experiments a thousand times repeated, what it tests is something it has gained by interpretation, that is, something not seen but believed. Following the unseen along the lines of interpreting thought, science is inevitably, even if reluctantly, led into the very presence of a thinking God.

Science  
strives after  
the invisible.

Having gained some insight into the present by this process, science applies this insight in the form of *history*, going backwards into the remotest past and unrolling its records, whether these are written on indestructible tables of stone

Science  
searches into  
the past.

All history  
interpreted  
by force and  
law.

Order in  
nature best  
explained by  
a directing  
God.

Science  
anticipates  
further and  
unparalleled  
discoveries.

The hope of  
science.

or suggested by the casual deposits of heaps of refuse. But history of every kind, even of nature, is interpreted force and law; and force, to be interpreted by law, must be orderly in its actings; and order in nature, if it does not require a directing God, is, to say the least, best explained by such a God. [Especially if the great law of evolution or development is accepted, and so a long story of progress is traced in the past, there emerges and shapes itself into being a continuous plan, a comprehensive thought wide enough to embrace all the events which have successively germinated into being, and long enough to provide for their gradual succession.] This requires a single mind as wide as that of one forecasting God, and as unwearied as His understanding.

But science is also a *prophet*. It revels in its confidence in the future. Science believes that its interpretations of the present and its solutions of the past will be surpassed by the discoveries that are to be; that both nature and man shall continue as heretofore, obeying the same laws as from the beginning—that the revelations already made of both shall be lost sight of and forgotten in the revelations of force and law which the future shall disclose, and that in all this progress one of these revelations shall prepare the way for another, as naturally and as gently as the dawn brightens into the sunrise. Here is hope,

ardent, confident, passionate hope, and, we may add, rational and well-grounded hope. On what does this hope rest—this hope for the stability of nature's laws and the promise of the evolving future? We need not answer by any abstract analysis or refined philosophizing. We concede that it is not necessary for success or eminence in any special science that this fundamental question should be raised. We know that for eminence in any speciality, the natural faith and hope of men in science as interpretation and history and prophecy, is altogether sufficient, whether it is or is not expanded into actual faith in the living God. We do not object in the least that science stops short in its explanations of phenomena, at molecules, and motion, and inertia, and attraction, and heat, and electricity, and heredity, and development, and variation, and environment. But we do contend that atheistic agnosticism gives no solution of those explanations that are fundamental to science which can be so satisfactory as is the creed of Christian theism. We also contend that the personal thinker is more than the scientist who interprets and prophesies, and that the living man demands and accepts a personal God as the best solution of all the problems which every special science raises, but which no special science can solve.

Eminence in any special science not dependent on faith in God.

Christian theism the best solution of the question raised by all the special sciences.



Illustration.

Perhaps you have traversed a forest at midnight, and have painfully and slowly felt out your path among the objects which the darkness seemed to conceal rather than reveal. You have mastered it by slow but sure steps, such as the blind man feels out by exact and reasoning touch. Anon you traverse the same forest by noon. How luminous has it become by the aid of the all-pervading light! Possibly you do not think of the glorious sun from which this light proceeds, but you cannot but know that what was once an obscure thicket, beset with dimness and shade, is now flooded with the revealing light, and that hope and joy have taken the place of caution and doubt and fear. In like manner does the recognition of a personal Intelligence who may be known by man give an assured hope to what men call science. In this way has it been to its advancing hosts a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day. The denial of such an Intelligence, or the assertion that he cannot be known, takes from science its hope, because it withdraws from the universe the illumination of personal reason and personal love, which all scientific thinking accepts as possible and rational.

The  
recognition  
of a know-  
able personal  
Intelligence  
gives  
assured hope  
to science.



II. *To be without God is to be without hope in respect to man's moral culture and perfection.*

What we *are* is of far greater importance than what we *know*. Strength and perfection of character are the supreme aim of all right-judging men. When they think of what man was made to be, and of what they themselves might become, they cannot but aspire. But strong as conscience is to elevate, control, and command, a personal God is needed by man to give to his conscience energy and life. Personality without is required to reinforce the personality within. Conscience itself is but another name for the moral person within, when exalted to its most energetic self-assertion and having to do with the individual self in its most characteristic manifestation, as it determines the character by its individual will. The theory that denies that God is a person very naturally and logically denies that man is a person. It makes him only a highly-developed set of phenomena flowering out from a hidden root—the unknowable unknown. What we call his personality, his will, his character, are all as unreal as the clouds of a summer noon—one moment apparently as fixed as mountain summits, and another dissolving as you gaze.

On any theory of man a personal God is needed to give energy to the moral ideal and to

Character  
more  
important  
than know-  
ledge.

A personal  
God alone  
gives energy  
and life to  
conscience.

Denial of the  
personality  
of God  
involves  
denial of the  
personality  
of man.

The better  
self.

proclaim it as his personal will. The other self within us is often powerless to enforce obedience. Much as we may respect its commands when forced to hear them, we can, alas, too easily shut our ears to its voice. But when this better self represents the living God, who, though greater than conscience, speaks through conscience, then conscience takes the throne of the universe, and her voice is that of the eternal king to which all loyal subjects respond with rejoicing assent, and with the exulting hope that the right will triumph they rejoice that God reigns in righteousness.

Man a  
sinner.

Needs de-  
liverance  
and hope.

Experience  
of failure.

But man is not always loyal either to conscience or to God. As a sinner against both, he has need of deliverance and hope. What he most needs and longs for is to be delivered from the narrowness of selfishness, the brutality of appetite, the fever of ambition, the meanness of envy, the fiendishness of hate, and the righteous displeasure of God against all these. When men know what they are, as measured by what they might have become, they cannot but be ashamed. When they review their failures after trial they cannot but despair. They find no rational ground in themselves for hope that they shall actually become better in the springs of feeling or the results of their life. If there is no God, or if they know of none who can show them what they

ought to be, and who can and will help them, and whom it is rational to ask to guide and help them, they are without hope of lasting and triumphant success. But if God has made Himself known in Christ in order to give us a living example of human excellence, and also to inspire us to make this excellence our own, and above all in order to remove every hindrance or doubt in the way—then we may hope, by trusting ourselves to this redeeming God, at last to be like Him. His life, His death, His words, His acts, His living self, are full of the inspiration of hope. That inspiration has wrought with mighty power through all the Christian generations. The more distinctly and lovingly Christ has made God to be known, the more confidently has man responded with hope that he shall be emancipated into likeness to God.

No hope of success without God

Christ the source of inspiration and hope.

(From all these hopes the agnostic atheism cuts us off. It first weakens and shatters our ideal of excellence; next it denies the freedom by which we may rise; and finally it withdraws the inspiration which is ministered by our personal deliverer and friend.) It weakens man's ideal. It cannot do otherwise, for it derives the law of duty from the changing feelings of our fellow-men. It degrades the law of duty into a shifting product of society, it resolves conscience with its rewards and penalties into the outgrowth

Effects of agnostic atheism.

The agnostic  
ideal has no  
permanence.

of the imagined favour or dislike of men as unstable as ourselves when this is fixed and transmitted by hereditary energy. Such an ideal, or law, or tribunal, can be neither sacred nor quickening nor binding, because it has no permanence. To be a good or perfect man in one æon is not the same thing as to be a good man in another. It is altogether a matter of taste or fashion, and each age under the law of development sets a new fashion for itself.

It sets free-  
dom aside.

It also sets freedom aside. To reach any part of this ideal is the result of simple mechanism. Character is the joint product of inheritance and circumstances. Freedom, with its possibilities and its kindling power, is but a fancy and a shadow—the mocking phantom of man's romantic longings or the vain surmising of his idle regrets.

Leaves no  
hope of  
Divine help.

There is neither inspiration nor hope for such a man in the help of God. He certainly needs help from some one greater than himself. If his moral ideals are not fixed, and he has no freedom with which to follow or reject such as he has, he is like a man who is bidden to walk in the sand that fails beneath his tread, and whose limbs are at the same time frozen with paralysis. Or he is like a bird with stiffened wings when dropped into an exhausted receiver. God cannot encourage or help him. To him

there is no God, or none of whom he can know that He can or will give him aid.

He has no certain or fixed ideal to which to aspire. He has no freedom with which even to pray. He has no God to whom to pray. What better can such a man do than to give himself up to the passions and impulses of the moment, which at least may divert his thoughts from his degradation, or amuse his aimless and hopeless existence, or throw startling and lurid lights over the darkness of his despair.

Unbridled  
licence the  
last resort

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III. *Belief in God is the only condition of hope in the advancement of public and social morality, and consequently in social stability and progress.*

The universe in which we live represents two factors, the physical and moral. Both of these are apparent in social phenomena. If God is required as the ground of our hope in nature and in physical science, and also in the sphere of morals, how much more in that sphere in which nature and spirit meet together! Those who deny God or who assert that we cannot know Him, can give no reason for their faith and hope in human progress. Force and law alone, whether physical or moral, do not answer all our questions here. Social forces, too, are

Agnosticism  
can give no  
reason for  
faith and  
hope in  
human  
progress.



less easily discerned than those purely physical. Even if we could resolve these forces into material agencies, and assume that their laws can be expressed in mathematical formulæ, this would avail us but little, because the forces are so complex and subtle, less easily traced, less readily analyzed, and less confidently interpreted, and less readily turned into prophecy. But if we believe these forces to be largely spiritual and personal, and accept freedom in both man and God, then our only rational ground of hope for man's future is that the Eternal has His own plans concerning man's future well-being, and will fulfil them in a consummation of good.

God's plans  
the ground  
of hope for  
man's future.

The past  
offers no  
security for  
future  
progress.

The developments of the past, except as they reveal some plan of God, give no hope for the future. In the facts of the past there is no security that the movement of man is onward. Manifold phenomena in human history suggest fearful forebodings of degeneracy, depravity, and retrogression. Long periods of darkness and eclipse have gathered in gloomy folds over the human race. Sudden collapses of faith have spread like the plague. Fearful convulsions have opened like the chasms of an earthquake to swallow up the gathered fruits of culture and art. But so soon as we know that God rules over man for man's moral discipline, and that Christ is setting up a kingdom of righteousness

and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, then we lift up our hearts, and gather courage for man's future history. We find good reason to conclude that man will continue to make progress in the knowledge of whatever is true, and just, and honest, and of good report. We become well assured that the simple law of Christian love will in due time be expanded by Christian science into thousands and tens of thousands of those special precepts of Christian ethics, which future generations shall joyfully accept, and that these will be light as air in their facile applications to the varying conditions of human existence, and strong as links of iron to hold men to every form of duty. We triumph in the faith that the time will come when this unwritten law shall sound within every obedient soul as winningly and as lovingly as the evening breeze that rests on the wind harp, and shall thunder as terribly in the ear of the disobedient as the voice of God from Sinai.

The prospect  
held out by  
Christianity.

Such a faith in human progress is rational. It is true indeed that if God is personal and man is free, the relations of God to man may be more complicated, and less easily known than if man is material and God an unknowable and impersonal force. On the other hand, social science gains nothing, but loses much, in telling us that the laws of society are as fixed as the laws of

The Christ-  
ian's hope in  
a human  
progress  
rational.

Faith in order and purpose necessary to a science of the future.

Order and purpose presuppose a personal thinker.

the planets, and that man is as plastic to their moulding as stardust or protoplasm are to the cosmic forces. For on either theory, if we are to have a science of the future, we must have faith in order and a purpose as the ground of our hope for that progress in which we confide. But order and purpose suppose a personal thinker. If we have no God, or a God whom we cannot know, we are without rational hope for that moral and social progress in which we all believe. We can only believe that men will make progress, because we desire it. The socialistic agnostic is a dogmatic sentimentalist, instead of a rational philosopher.

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IV. *Atheism, whether positive or negative, gives no hope for the conduct or comfort of individual life.*

The believer in God alone has solid ground for hope touching his own life.

Each man's personal life is ever present to himself as the object of his hopes or fears. Shall this life be long or short? Shall it be bright or dark? Shall it be a failure or a success? The man who believes in God and trusts in His guidance, he, and he alone, has solid ground for hope. He knows God as a force acting by law, and he knows Him no less as a person acting in personal relations of influence and love. From both he gathers hope. He knows Him through

the forces of the universe which surround and confront him at every step, and he knows Him as the heavenly Father who animates and directs these forces in every single joy or sorrow. In both relations he is in harmony with him; with the first so far as he knows them, and with the God Himself who controls both the known and the unknown to his true well-being, and makes even his ignorance and mistakes a blessing.

He is in full harmony with God.

He knows and obeys God as revealed in nature. He believes most profoundly that He acts in the majestic forces of the universe and their unchanging laws. He recognizes the truth that both are everywhere present in the world of matter and of spirit. He watches these forces as they move, often seemingly like the summer cloud that broods lazily over the quiet earth at noon; sometimes like the cloud also in that it needs only to be touched by another as quiet as itself, and the thunderbolt and tornado will leap forth with destructive energy. But he does not limit His presence and his rule to physical agencies alone. He recognizes also His moral and spiritual forces and laws. Though the moral are less obtrusive, they are none the less sure; though slower in their working, they are none the less energetic. Their energy is even greater, resembling in this those subtler agents of matter which, though they glide into one another in secret hiding-

He believes that God acts in the forces and laws of nature.

He recognizes the equal certainty of God's moral and spiritual forces.

places and under Protean phases, are for that very reason the more easily gathered for a fearful retribution.

Man in the  
midst of  
nature's  
forces and  
laws.

Within this vast enginery of force and law man stands in his weakness and his strength. The spectacle of this enginery is sublime, and every day is making it more magnificent, for every day reveals something new in force or law which manifests more of the thought and power of God. But while man continually finds his strength in his power to interpret by scientific thought the forces and laws which had been before unknown, he is in the same proportion made more and more sensible of his weakness in his augmented apprehension of what is unrevealed. He is beset with fear lest he shall make some

His question.

fatal mistake. Hence he asks earnestly, Is there nothing more in this wide universe than force and law? If there is nothing more, no man is so much to be pitied as he—the man of scientific knowledge and scientific imagination, for no man feels so lonely and helpless as he. He is alone! alone! as he muses upon the vastness of this great solitude, peopled though it be with the enormous agents that haunt and overmaster him with their presence, but are without a thought or care for his personal life. Could he but see behind these forces a personal being like himself, and capable of directing both force and law to

His loneliness  
and  
helplessness  
on the  
negative  
supposition.



issues of blessings to men, how welcome would that knowledge be to his lonely heart. That God he may see and find if he will. He is suggested by his own personality, which is his nobler, nay, his essential self. He is demanded by the weakness and limitations of his own nature. Why should there not be a personal and living God behind this machinery of force and law which we call nature? Why should I not know a living spirit, as well as unknown force and definite law? and why should I not accept personality in God as the best explanation of both? There is, there must be such a Person; He fills this vast solitude by His immanent presence and His animating life. He directs the forces which I cannot control. While I dare not transgress any known manifestations of His will either in force or law, I can trust myself to His personal care even though I err from limited knowledge or foresight.

God may be found.

What natural theism thus suggests, Christian theism declares for man's guidance and comfort. The living God becomes our Father in heaven, the Guardian of our life, our ever-present Friend, who understands our most secret thoughts, our weakest fears, our blushing shame, our conscious guilt, and who can bring to each and to all the sympathy, and comfort, and guidance, of a personal friendship and an assured blessing. In what words of sublime condescension and moving

God according to Christian Theism.

The declara-  
tions of  
Christ.

Illustrated  
by His life.

Confirmed  
by His  
resurrection.

Repeated  
from heaven.

pathos have these truths been declared: "Even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Ye are of more value than many sparrows. Take no thought for the morrow. Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." These are words of Him who spake as never man spake. Nor did He speak them alone. He lived them in His life, exemplifying them in look and demeanour, and showing their import by His loving trust. The same revelations of God were confirmed by His resurrection and His ascending majesty as He went into the presence of His Father and our Father, of His God and our God. From that presence we hear the assuring words: "He that spared not His own Son, but freely gave Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things. Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." In this faith in God as the guide of their personal life, Christian believers by myriads have lived and died. In this hope, and in this alone, can the living of this generation stand.

V. *The man without God is without hope for a future life.*

For such a man, at best, another life is simply possible. He has no rational assurance that it is certain. The universe is so vast and man's dwelling is so contracted; its inhabitants are so manifold, and one among them is of so little moment; the distances are so enormous, and man's power to traverse them is so limited; the histories of the prehistoric ages are so gigantic in their forgotten details, and yet the title of each chapter is but an inscription over millions of the dead, that men tremble before nature, as when a child looks upward on the face of an overhanging cliff, or peers over the edge of a yawning gulf.

No certainty  
of a future  
life to the  
man without  
God.

Man shudders before nature's remorseless insensibility. He notices how little she makes of the dead; and how little she cares for the living—how she mocks at and trifles with sensibility and with life. An earthquake swallows up tens of thousands of living men. The jaws of the gulf that opened to receive them swing back to their place, and forthwith flowers adorn the ghastly seam, as if in mockery of the dead who are buried beneath. A great ship founders in the ocean, freighted with a thousand living souls. As they go down they raise one shriek of anguish that it would seem should rend the sky. But

Nature's  
insensibility.

the cry is over, and the waters roll over the place as smoothly as though those thousand lives were not sleeping in death below. Of another life there are no tidings and few suggestions, a possibility, or perhaps a probability, but no hope.

The possibility of a future life denied by many.

Nowadays even this possibility is denied by many, and the probability against such a life is hardened into a certainty, and men strive to prove that they are not immortal as men strive for a great prize. All the analogies of nature are interpreted to prove the extinction of man's being. Those who acknowledge no God but a mysterious force, those who deny to God personality and thought and affection and sympathy, most reasonably find no evidence in nature for a future life, for when they look upon her stony and inflexible face, they find all the evidence to be against it.

The awakening to the fact of God's existence and personality.

Let such a man awake to the fact that God is, that He lives a personal life, that nature is not so much His hiding-place as it is a garment of the revealing light; that the forces of nature are His instruments, and the laws of nature His steadying and eternal thoughts; that man is made after God's image, and can interpret His thoughts and commune with His living self; that life is man's school, every arrangement and lesson of which points to a definite end; that this end

is not accomplished here—then not only does there spring up in his heart the hope that this life shall be continued in another, but this hope becomes almost a certainty. But this hope is a certainty so long, and only so long, as this life is interpreted by the light of God's thought and God's personality. So long as this light continues to shine, every difficulty that would make against another life is turned into an argument in its favour, and every new doubt suggests the necessity of a new hope. Every roughness that has cast a shadow on the picture reflects a gleam of light, and the hard, inexpressive face of nature herself becomes radiant with promise and hope.

The effect of  
the awaken-  
ing.

Now let God be seen to break forth from His hiding-place, and to manifest himself in the Christ who conquers death and brings the immortal life to light through His rising and ascension, and the hope that had been reached as a conclusion of assured conviction is shouted forth in the song of triumph, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to His abundant mercy, has begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."

The effect of  
seeing God  
in Christ.

I know that this argument, which sustains the hope of another life, is set aside by the agnostics with the denial that another life is of any value

The value of  
a future life  
denied.



The substitute for a future life.

or that men care for it. The next step is to argue that it is weak and ignoble to expect or desire it. The next is to substitute for it an ideal existence in the lives of others by the continuance of our thoughts and activities in those of others, in whose lives we may expect to prolong our own. Let those accept this substitute for a future life who can, and find in it what satisfaction they may. They will certainly confess that this fancied contentment with personal annihilation falls immeasurably short of what men call hope, and preëminently of the Christian hope that is full of immortality.

The agnostic doctrine practically tested.

The doctrine itself seems to us to be simply inhuman and unnatural, and to be refuted by the simplest practical test. If men do not care for a future life, how should they, and why do they, care for any future of the present life? If they do not dread annihilation, why do they not more frequently commit suicide? If the hope for a nobler future existence does not animate and inspire men as an original and inextinguishable impulse, how happens it that men cleave with such tenacity to the hope for a brief and perhaps ignoble hour in the present? Why is it so rare that even the most disciplined of modern philosophers is ready to exchange the briefest hour of personal being for the lauded immortality of thought or emotion in the person of another? It

is not bravery, it is simple bravado to deny or weaken the longing for a future life which every man confesses and feels. The laboured apostrophes of George Eliot, and the studied declamations of John Morley over the entrancing prospect of annihilation, are silenced by the pithy confessions of Shakespeare in *Hamlet*. The very earnestness of the denial is but a confession of the strength of the desire. I know that when a man half or wholly denies that God is, or that God is anything to him, he must, to be consistent, deny in the next breath that there is a future life. I know that the temptation is very strong that he should then seek to persuade himself that he cares nothing for that life. But he cannot succeed. He must have hope for this life, and he must have hope for the future. And he needs to know God and to believe in God if he would have hope for either.

George Eliot  
and  
John Morley.

Denial of a  
future life  
involved in  
denial of  
God.

This, then, is our conclusion: That so far as man denies God, or denies that God can be known, he abandons hope of every kind—that intellectual hope which is the life of scientific thought; hope for his own moral progress; hope for the progress of society; hope for guidance and comfort in his personal life; and hope for that future life for which the present is a preparation. As he lets those hopes go one by one, his life loses its light and its dignity; morality

Abandon-  
ment of  
hope of  
every kind  
involved in  
denial of  
God.

Effect on the  
agnostic.

loses its enthusiasm and its energy, science has no promise of success, sin gains a relentless hold, sorrow and darkness have no comfort, and life becomes a worthless farce or a sad tragedy, neither of which is worth the playing, because both end in nothing. Sooner or later this agnostic without hope will become morose and surly, or sensual and self-indulgent, or avaricious and churlish, or cold and selfish, or cultured and hollow,—in a word, a theoretical or a practical pessimist, as any man must who believes the world as well as himself to be without any worthy end for which one man or many men should care to live. Possibly, under special advantages of culture, he may be a modern Stoic without the moral earnestness with which the ancient Stoic grimly confronted fate, or a modern Epicurean without the unconscious gaiety that Christianity has rendered for ever impossible; or he will grope through the world seeking the shadow of a religion that he knows can never give him rest, and a God whom he denies can ever be found. But in either case, the story of his life will be summed up in the fearful epitaph, “*He lived without God, and died without hope.*”

Agnosticism  
a topic of  
present  
interest.

Agnosticism is a topic of present interest, on both its speculative and its practical side. As a speculation, however, it is not new. It is as old

as human thought. The doubts and misgivings from which it springs are older than the oldest fragment of human literature. The questions which it seeks to answer are as distinctly uttered in the book of Job as are the replies of sneering despair which are paraded in the last scientific periodical. Modern science and philosophy have not answered these questions. It may be doubted whether they have shed any light upon them. They have simply enlarged man's conceptions of the finite, and thus made it more easy for him to overlook or deny his power and his obligation to know the Infinite and the Self-existent. Culture and literature, to say the least, do not justify the modern contempt for positive faith. They simply widen our knowledge of human weakness and error, but most rashly conclude that every form of faith and worship is an attitude of blind wonder before the unknown, or a sentimental groping after what can never be found. These inferences are hasty and unwarranted, for the reason that modern culture and literature were never so enriched by the Christian faith, and never could find reasons so abundant for acknowledging Christ to be divine. And yet we must acknowledge that to the superficially educated and the hasty thinker, Agnosticism offers many attractions, because it answers so many questions by a simple formula, and gathers or disposes of

Its antiquity as a speculation.

What science and philosophy have done.

The effect of culture and literature.

Attractions of agnosticism to the superficial.

The popularity of its theories.

Its tendencies restrained by counter-acting influences in many cases.

Ultimate results in others.

many phenomena under plausible generalizations, and above all, because it releases the conscience and the life from present obligations of duty. Hence its theories run like wildfire among the multitudes, whose superficial or unfinished culture and training, or whose moral preferences prepare them to receive it. With many persons these tendencies are comparatively harmless, at least for a time. The old traditions of duty and self-control, of decorum and worship, still remain, even though God and conscience are speculatively abandoned, and Christ is an unsolved enigma, and Christian hopes are harmless dreams, and the future life a questionable inheritance, and this life is a prize in a lottery, and the fervors and self-denials and self-conquests of the Christian life are innocent but vapid sentimentalities. With others, after a longer time, the God at first unknown is openly denied, and Christ is rejected with passionate scorn, and the inspiration and restraints of Christian sentiment are contemptuously abandoned. By others the theory is applied still further. Their motto is, *Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die*. To one or another of these dangers very many are exposed, most of all to the danger that the energy of their faith may be weakened, and the fire of their zeal may be lowered, and the tone of their moral and spiritual life may be relaxed by sympathy with this



paralysis of faith, which is everywhere more or less prevalent.

No calamity can befall a young man which is so serious as the loss of that fire and hopefulness and courage for this life and the future, which are so congenial to the beginning of his active life. Hence no sign of our times is more depressing than that so many refined and thoughtful young men so readily accept the suggestions of doubt, and take a position of indifference or irresponsibility in respect to the truths of Christian theism and the personal obligations which they enforce.

The greatest calamity to a young man.

Against these tendencies would I warn young men earnestly, by the consideration that so fast and so far as God is unknown by any man, so fast and so far does hope depart from his soul: hope for all that a man should care to live for; hope for scientific progress, for his own moral welfare, for the progress of the race, for a successful life and for a happy immortality. Therefore do I declare to them as they soberly look back upon their past life, and wistfully look forward to the unknown future, that if they would live a life of cheerful, joyful, and buoyant hopefulness they must live a life that is controlled and hallowed and cheered by God's presence and by a constant faith in His forgiving goodness. All else that a man should care for is secured by this living hope in the living and ever-present God—intellectual

Warning to young men.

The conditions of a hopeful life.

What living  
hope in God  
secures.

success and satisfaction as he grows in all knowledge and culture, sure progress in moral goodness, prosperity in his efforts for the well-being of man, the kind direction of his earthly life, and the assurance and anticipation of the life which is immortal. "All things are yours; . . . and ye are Christ's; and Christ is God's."



# MODERN MATERIALISM.

BY THE LATE

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## Argument of the Tract.

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THE mystery of Being is impenetrable. We only know the attributes and qualities of things. Elementary substances are few. The universal basis of the objects of sense is designated "matter." A large proportion of the objects of sense are living beings. They have certain characteristics and constituents in common. Life does not result from their combination. The mystery of life is as impenetrable as the mystery of matter. Mind involves life, but is not co-extensive with it. Thought is not a product of living matter, nor a movement of matter. Mind underlies thought. The changes of organic bodies, as well as their mutual attractions, and the action of chemical affinities, are due to force. There are different kinds of force. Matter is incapable of motion without force. The difficulties of materialism are insuperable. No answer is attempted to be given to the question, Whence were matter and motion? The attempt to reduce all existence to a material origin lands us in idealism. Materialistic principles lead to the conclusion that matter has a dependent and derived existence, and are utterly incapable of explaining the mysteries of life and thought. The construction of the system of nature must depend on something that is not law—on the will of an omniscient and omnipotent God. Materialism necessarily denies the immortality of the soul. The atomic theory is not necessarily inconsistent with Theism. The views of Cudworth, Descartes, and Newton are quoted.

# MODERN MATERIALISM.



## I.



AMONG the wonders by which we are surrounded there is no greater wonder than that of Being. Contemplating any one of the most familiar objects of our senses, when we ask what it is which presents to us certain observable qualities, what it is to which they belong and are due, what is the thing itself, apart from the combination of qualities by which it is known to us, we cannot get a satisfactory and intelligible answer; we find ourselves in the presence of a great mystery, and that—the mystery of Being.

Simple  
Being.

If we consider, for example, a specimen of the substance called Gold : it is known to us, generally, by its colour, its malleability, fusibility, and relative weight; and to some it is known as possessing other qualities or attributes. But, whatever the number and character of these, it is not, and it cannot be thought of, as an assemblage of certain qualities and attributes, but as that *in* which they are assembled or united, that to which they belong. This

More than  
its qualities.



inner ultimate something, the subject in which such qualities are inherent, the substance, the underlying reality, of the presence and nature of which they are the indications, must have an actual existence. *They* are not, but *it* is—gold. They, taken altogether, do not form *it*, but *it* is so constituted as to possess and exhibit *them*. And yet no analysis has ever revealed it to our senses, nor can our minds form any distinct conception of it. As Sir Isaac Newton says in the conclusion of the “*Principia*,”

“We only see the forms and colours of bodies, we only hear sounds, we only touch the outer surfaces, we only smell their odours, and taste their flavours; the inmost substances we apprehend by no sense, by no reflex action.”

Attributes  
of Being.

Extending our observation, we notice that most objects of sense are compounds, consisting of various substances in combination, and having qualities arising from such combination. The elementary substances, however—those of which all others are composed—have been, perhaps, most of them discovered, and are not very numerous. Each of these is simple, and although it may have qualities which are common to others, it possesses them in virtue of its own nature alone.

If, in order to get as near as possible to the foundation and root of Being, we inquire what it is which all these elementary substances possess in common, and in all their minutest portions, without which they could not be material sub-

stances at all, and which suffices to give them merely the character of material substance, we find these three necessary attributes or elements of material Being: *extension, moveableness, and impenetrability*. That is, a thing, to be a material substance, must take up some room in space, it must be capable of being moved from one place to another, and its place, while it is in it, cannot be occupied by anything else.

The  
necessary  
elements of  
Material  
Being

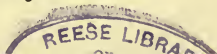
But here again we do not say or think that the combination of extension, moveableness, and impenetrability, makes up a body, but that a body is something which is extended, moveable, and impenetrable. We are still far enough from comprehending what that something is. It is that, however, which, as forming the universal basis of objects of sense, we designate by the term *matter*.

Matter the  
basis of the  
objects of  
sense.

Before we proceed to notice the attempts which have been made to discover the nature and constitution of this unknown reality which meets us everywhere and in everything, we must attend to the fact that a large proportion of the objects of our senses consists of active or self-acting substances, that is, of living beings. They differ from the rest of the objects of sense by the possession, even in their lowest forms, of an organisation, and of the faculties of feeding, growing, and producing their like. They are all compound substances, and all composed of the same elementary sub-

Living  
beings.

Their dis-  
tinguishing  
character-  
istics.



stances, which, let it be remarked, have none of these faculties.

**Life.**

But, although we know what are the material constituents of every living structure, we cannot ascribe life itself to their combination. Such combination may be necessary to life, but it does not of itself constitute nor produce life.

“Life,” says the great naturalist Cuvier, “exercising upon the elements which at every instant form part of the living body, and upon those which it attracts to it, an action contrary to that which would be produced without it by the usual chemical affinities, it is inconsistent to suppose that it can itself be produced by those affinities.”

**Not a  
combination  
of attributes.**

We cannot therefore conceive of life as the aggregate of the material substances composing the living Being, or of their affinities, any more than we can conceive of a substance as the aggregate of the qualities or powers which meet in it, and by which it is distinguished and manifested. The mystery of Life is as impenetrable as the mystery of simple Being.

**Mind.**

The remaining, and perhaps the most mysterious phenomenon of existence is Mind. Mind involves life. But as life is not co-existent with all matter, so neither is mind co-existent with all life. And as life is not accounted for, or caused, by the mere assemblage or action of those elementary substances which are always found united in every living thing, so neither is mind accounted for or caused by the union or operation of all those

substances, properties, and powers which in our experience are found combined in every thinking Being.

Mind is, in all cases known to us, connected with a certain organization, and also with the faculties of *feeding, growing, and propagating*. But it is difficult to conceive of these as essential and absolutely necessary to the origination, development, and exercise of thought. They may be the condition of the existence of material Beings who have mind, without being the conditions of the existence of mind itself. Thought, even in its lowest phase of mere volition, or conscious choice, cannot be a product of living matter, for then it would be itself a material object of sense.

Distinct  
from its  
environment

Thought not  
a product of  
living  
matter.

Nor can it be a movement of matter, such as a vibration; for not every movement or vibration of the matter—the grey pulp brain, let us say—which is the organ of thought, is a thought; consequently there is a difference between such movement or vibration as is merely mechanical, and such as is simultaneous or identical with thought; whence it follows that something more than movement or vibration is necessary to constitute thought. Mind underlies thought as matter underlies all perceptible substance, and as life underlies all organic substance. Life, in our experience, is invariably connected with matter, and mind with life and matter; that is, with living matter. But the connection of life with

Nor a  
movement  
of matter.

Mind  
underlies  
thought.

Life  
independent  
of matter.

Mind  
independent  
of life and  
matter.

Force.

Different  
kinds of  
force.

Force in  
relation to  
material  
existence,  
life, and  
thought.

matter is, so to speak, arbitrary : that is, it is not traceable, as an effect, to the action of material elements. Life is something of itself independent of matter. Similarly, the connection of mind with life appears from observation and reasoning equally arbitrary. Mind is not due to mere life—nor a function or development of it ; but it is something of itself independent of life and matter.

We must also take into consideration an attribute or property of all being known to us, which indeed some think entitled to be accounted an element of being. This is Force. That to which movement, and the changes of organic bodies are due, as well as their mutual attraction and the action of chemical affinities, is Force. The growth, nutrition, reproduction and spontaneous motion of organised bodies depend upon force, called, for distinction's sake, Vital force. The same term expresses the distinct idea arising from the exercise of what are called the various powers of the mind. There is *mental* force as well as *vital* force and *physical* force. Each differs from the other as to the subjects specially and appropriately affected by it, and in the mode of its action, but they have that in common of which we can form an abstract apprehension, designated by the term Force.

Considering force in its relation to the three modes of being—simple material existence, life, and thought—we cannot conceive of the faculties



of life otherwise than as present in and exerted by that which has life; nor of mental faculties, or the power of thought, otherwise than as inherent in and essential to mind. But we *can* conceive of physical force as external to that which has a material existence only. Indeed, it seems impossible to conceive that such forces as gravitation, or attraction and repulsion, can be possessed and exerted independently, as inherent, essential powers, by matter, the subjection of which to action by those forces can only be explained by its own incapacity of action—its undoubted attribute of inertia.

All mere matter, or matter without life, must, in physical calculations—in mechanics, for instance, or astronomy—be treated as incapable of motion or change, except as acted upon from without, and by some force applied. Newton has been careful to state that he employs the word “attraction,” in speaking of the action of bodies on each other, not in a physical sense. Indeed, in another passage of the “Principia,” he says that attractions, physically speaking, are rather to be considered as impulses. In the end of his great work he seems inclined to the opinion that there is some subtle spirit by the force and action of which all movements of matter are determined. In his letter to Dr. Bentley, he says:

Force not inherent in matter.

Newton's use of the word “attraction.”

Definition 8, B. 1. Prop. 69, “Scho-lium.”

B. 1, Section xi., Introduction.

Letter to Bentley.

“The supposition of an innate gravity essential to and inherent in matter, so that a body can act upon another at a

distance, and through a vacuum, without anything intermediate to convey from one to another their force and reciprocal action, is to my mind so great an absurdity, that I do not believe that any person who possesses an ordinary faculty for reflecting upon objects of a physical character can ever admit it."

Early  
objection to  
the doctrine  
of gravita-  
tion.

Objection was early made against the doctrine of gravitation that it involved the revival of the old scholastic belief in occult qualities, which the whole philosophical and scientific world had agreed in rejecting. Newton's language, above quoted, is a protest against this charge. Euler, in the next generation of men of science, also showed that no such belief was necessitated by the observed facts and demonstrated laws of gravitation. Among modern mathematicians and natural philosophers, Le Sage, Biot, and Arago, may be cited as repudiating the notion that the power of attraction resides in matter as an inherent and essential quality.

Materialism  
an ancient  
system.

From the very earliest known times of philosophical inquiry, however, down to the present, there have been those who held the opinion that all existence is to be traced back to mere matter, and that all the phenomena of existence of every kind are to be ascribed to the capabilities or qualities inherently possessed by the ultimate particles of matter. Those, including the most ancient and the most recent, who have carried the process of simplification to the greatest extreme, limit these original attributes of material elements to mag-

nitude, figure, position, and mobility. From these, all other qualities of all known existences are supposed to have been developed, and to be due to diversities of arrangement and combination of the primordial atoms.

The first difficulty in this system is clearly to account for the existence of an infinite number of atoms; the next, to account for their movement, so as to coalesce and form the conditions for subsequent interaction. Most of the ancient and modern physicists who have maintained this theory, being opposed to the belief of a Creator, or the direct action of a Divine Being in the original production or subsequent formation of all things, have adopted the hypothesis of the eternal and necessary self-existence of the atoms of matter. For, supposing there was a time when no substance existed possessing the primary qualities which we ascribe to matter, it is impossible and inconceivable that any such substance should come into existence without the exertion of an Almighty will, that is, the will of a personal Being who is absolutely Almighty.

Its physical  
difficulties.

Origin of  
matter.

Again, movement, without which the atoms of the universe must have for ever remained separate and independent particles, was assumed, by the older theorists of the materialistic school, to have been eternally co-existent with these atoms, and to have possessed a rotatory or vorticular character,

Of motion.

Aristotle.

whence their ultimate conglomeration into existing forms. Aristotle, in his *Metaphysics*,<sup>1</sup> treats this assumption with deserved contempt, reproaching its authors with neglect or inability to assign any cause of motion, and claims for those alone who referred the origin of all substance to a supreme intelligence the credit of establishing a principal which is the cause of motion to things.

Solution of  
Epicurus.

Epicurus, indeed, endeavoured to account for motion by the supposed necessity of a continual descent of the primordial atoms in space by this action of gravity; a notion, due, of course, to his ignorance of the fact that "up" and "down," "above" and "below," "ascent" and "descent," are relative terms, and that gravity could not account for motion in any one direction rather than another, nor, indeed, for any motion at all. Perceiving, also, that this theory implied motion in parallel lines, and therefore did not provide for concourse and coalescence, without which matter could not have acquired its rudimentary forms, Epicurus proceeded to imagine a slight deviation or swerving from their original direction of movement by some atoms, so as to come into contact with others; but for such deviation—its where, when, and how, no cause was, or on his principles could be, assigned. His whole system, moral as well as physical, is based upon this crude hypo-

His funda-  
mental  
hypothesis  
crude.

<sup>1</sup> Book I., close of Chapters 3 & 4.

thesis, "a childish fiction," as Cicero very justly designates it—"a fond thing vainly invented."

De Finibus,  
i. 19. De  
Fato, i. 9.

The modern theory, substantially that of Kant and La Place, is, as enunciated by the latter, that matter originally existed in a state of

"nebulosity so diffuse that its existence could hardly have been suspected,"

and that the formation of nuclei, and of separate zones revolving around them, breaking up afterwards into detached spherical masses, was due to the action of gravitation, or mutual attraction, the collision and condensation of the cosmical particles producing intense heat, which resulted in the fusion of the masses, which were afterwards solidified by the cooling caused by radiation.

Modern  
theory.

This theory is equally inadequate with that of Epicurus to account for matter and motion. For, however diffuse the nebulosity, it must have consisted of separate particles, each of which, if not self-subsisting and eternal, must have been created. And motion, arising from gravitation, must have been either an original and therefore essential and co-eternal property or state of the mass of atoms, or it must have been communicated to it by some independent cause. In the former case it is impossible to understand what should have determined the commencement of the processes which have resulted in the present state of things. In the latter, matter was put into a different state

Inadequate  
to account  
for matter  
and motion.

Dilemma.



from that in which it originally existed—received a property which it had not before; but whence could this come, how could this be effected, but by the will and power of a Creator?

It may be said, and, for scientific purposes, with apparent reasonableness, that those who maintain the theory that, given matter and motion, all things that are may be accounted for without the necessity of supposing final causes, are not obliged also to account for the existence of matter and motion. But the mind, in contemplating this system, and endeavouring to realise the principle on which it is based, is logically compelled to examine its primary conditions, and to apply to them its radical principle, and therefore to ask,—If from matter and motion, progressively, and step by step, each deducible by natural law from the preceding, all things and all states of things have proceeded, whence were matter and motion?

Demand.

## II.

Remarking, and registering the important fact, that no answer is attempted to be given to this inquiry, or none sufficiently plausible to be adopted or countenanced by any eminent physicist, and that therefore nothing has been proposed which can supply the place of an intelligent personal Being as the Creator of the elements of existence, we proceed to the consideration of the system of modern

No intelligible  
reply.

Materialism, as propounded by its latest and boldest professors, and interpreted by various physiologists among us, who, without admitting its extravagant assumptions, accept it as the basis of the theory of the construction of all things by development and evolution.

Pure Materialism resolves all Being into *matter* and *force*, denying the fact or possibility of the existence of aught that is not material. Its maxims are :

Creed of  
pure  
materialism.

“No matter without force, and no force without matter; matter and force are inseparable, eternal and indestructible; there can be no independent force, since all force is an inherent and necessary property of matter, consequently there can be no immaterial creating power; inorganic and organic forms are results of different accidental combinations of matter; life is a particular combination of matter taking place under favourable circumstances; thought is a movement of matter; the soul is a function of material organisation.”

Such a system, it is obvious, is essentially atheistic: it excludes God from the universe. To those who receive it, the idea not only of the action but of the existence of a purely spiritual Being, infinite and omnipotent, is impossible: equally so the immateriality and immortality of the human soul.

The system  
essentially  
atheistic.

One of the first physiologists of the age, Professor Huxley, in a remarkable treatise on the “Physical Basis of Life,” published in the *Fortnightly Review* for February, 1869, asserts that

Denied in its  
conclusions  
by Professor  
Huxley.

“the materialistic position, that there is nothing in the world but matter, force, and necessity, is as utterly devoid of justification as the most baseless of theological dogmas.”

But not in  
its pre-  
misses.

The  
proposition  
which he  
accepts.

He admits  
that their  
terms are  
materialistic.

What his  
reason for  
this  
admission  
implies.

But, although he thus pronounces against the ultimate conclusions of materialism, regarding them as unscientific, unphilosophical, and, indeed, immoral, he assents to some of its most important and most startling propositions, those, in fact, from which its advocates, and others beside them, think that the conclusions which he considers unjustifiable must necessarily and immediately follow. He believes, and produces his reasons for believing, that all vital action, or life, is the result of the molecular forces of the elementary living substance, acting in a manner purely mechanical—

“the product of a certain disposition of material molecules ;”  
and he thinks it an inevitable deduction from this statement, that

“thought is the expression of molecular change in that matter of life which is the source of our other vital phenomena.”

He admits that the terms of these propositions are distinctly materialistic, and contends for the employment of materialistic terminology in the investigation of the order of nature, alleging, as a special and indeed the principal reason for his demand, that this terminology connects thought with the other phenomena of the universe. This reason implies that all the other phenomena of the universe are material, and that thought cannot be conceived of as connected with them unless it be conceived of as material—assumptions by no means allowable as axioms in the outset of this inquiry.

There can be no better preparation for the discussion of the principles of materialism than a summary exhibition of the train of observations by which Professor Huxley brings us face to face with the great problem of the origin of life. The following will be found a fair representation of his statements.

All living substances, from the lowest to the highest, possess a unity of faculty or power; all exercise the functions of feeding, moving, growth, and reproduction. They all possess a unity of form. They are all composed of corpuscles, or structural units, fundamentally of the same character, to which the name of *protoplasm* or "first formation," has been given. He instances the human being and the nettle. A nucleated mass of protoplasm is the structural unit of the human body; and the human body in its perfect condition is a multiple of such units, variously modified. The nettle arises, as the man does, in a particle of nucleated protoplasm; and similarly the whole substance of the nettle is made up of a repetition of such masses.

Huxley's  
Biology.

Protoplasm.

But there exist innumerable living creatures which are each a single particle of protoplasm; each being nothing more than a unit of living substance, yet having an independent existence. And these, and all things that live, are composed of the same material elements—carbon, hydrogen,

The material  
elements of  
all living  
things.

They can  
derive life  
from a living  
substance.

Central pro-  
position.

Vital action  
necessary to  
the produc-  
tion of life.

oxygen, and nitrogen. These, in various combinations, produce carbonic acid, water, and ammonia, which compounds, under certain conditions, give rise to the complex body, protoplasm, the basis of life. These elementary substances are themselves lifeless; and in their combination they can only form a living substance when appropriated and acted upon by a living substance already existing. Nor can every living substance so employ them immediately. Plants alone can do this. The animal depends for protoplasm upon the already formed protoplasm of the vegetable, whereas vegetable matter converts carbonic acid, water, and ammonia immediately into protoplasm. It must, however, be *living* vegetable matter. Without the agency of pre-existing living protoplasm these substances cannot form the matter of actual life.

We have now arrived at a fact upon which it is desirable to pause, and which should be kept steadily in mind, for it is a cardinal fact in this inquiry. The material elements of which every living substance is composed cannot of themselves combine into a living compound. Life must act upon them before they can contribute to life. There must be vital action employed upon the lifeless substances necessary to life in order that in their combination they may form a living substance. Life can only come from life. This looks very much like a scientifically ascertained neces-



sity for an original infusion of life into matter by a separate act of creation. The well-known experiments of Professor Tyndall, which have disproved the alleged fact of spontaneous generation, powerfully support this conclusion. Tyndall.

But both these physiologists, in their zeal for the construction of a continuous chain of material agency, without proof, and contrary to proof, deduce from the fact that a combination of carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, and nitrogen is necessary to life, the wholly "ultra-experimental conception," as Professor Tyndall himself calls it, that life is the immediate resultant of the properties of these elementary substances, the product of a certain disposition of material molecules, and all vital action the result of the molecular forces of the protoplasm which displays it. And if this be conceded, there is drawn from it the conclusion that thought is the expression of molecular change in that matter of life which is the source of our other vital phenomena. Unwarrantable conclusion.

To ordinary, perhaps also to logical minds, it will appear, that from this conclusion, by an almost immediate deduction, we derive the doctrine of the most advanced materialists, viz., that the thinking substance, the soul, is a material organisation, its attributes and powers merely properties of matter, results of a certain aggregation and arrangement of its molecules. Inevitable inference.

Disclaimed  
by Huxley.

Let it not be supposed that Professor Huxley is chargeable with maintaining this doctrine. In repudiating materialism, and asserting that he is "individually no materialist," he must be understood to reject it.

On the  
ground of  
our ignor-  
ance.

He promises in his Essay to point out "the only path" by which, in his judgment, extrication from what he truly calls "the materialistic slough" of the conclusion to which he has conducted us is possible. On examination, it is found that the relief and refuge from materialism which he offers consists in acquiescence in our total ignorance of cause and effect, and of the nature of matter and spirit, which, he says, are but names for the imaginary substrata of groups of natural phenomena.

The point at which he interposes a check in the descent through materialistic interpretation of vital and mental phenomena to absolute materialism is somewhat arbitrarily chosen. He draws the line between the materialism of the process of thought, which he allows, and the materialism of the thinking substance, which he is not prepared to allow. Ignorance of the nature of causation and of matter and spirit, is held to be a sufficient obstacle to further progress. He might have applied this principle earlier, for he had occasion for it. In the course of his previous investigation he had arrived at a term where, in the words of

Which  
ought to  
have pre-  
vented his  
conclusion.

Mr. Disraeli, he had "met the insoluble." His continuous straight line of reasoning had ended in a circle. He had discovered the material elements of life, but he had discovered also that they do not of themselves produce life, and that life is necessary to render them vital. But he would not accept the position. Not content at that point to pause before the absolutely unknown, he endeavoured to bridge over the void with a conjecture. The confessedly unintelligible influence by which the matter of life is made to live, is *assumed* to be something which has a representative or correlative in the lifeless elements of which it is composed; that is to say, it is *supposed* to be a strictly material agency, a result of the yet undiscovered and perhaps undiscoverable properties of certain dead matter.

Huxley's  
assumption  
and incon-  
sistency.

And this assumption is necessary in order to proceed to the next proposition, that thought, mental feeling, and will, are the expression of molecular changes in the matter of life, originating, as life itself is supposed to originate, in the properties and arrangements of its elementary particles. So that, if he had acted consistently with his former course by following only experience and observation, and with his consequent course, by stopping short at the great blank created by our ignorance of matter and causation, he could not have advanced so near to the materialistic doctrine of the origin of life or the nature of thought.

His next  
proposition  
depends on  
his assump-  
tion.

The  
advantage  
of his in-  
consistency.

Nor can any fail to notice the formidable advantage given to the advocates of absolute materialism by this inconsistency. When once we have arrived at the position that thought is a result of the properties of matter, the inference that the thinking substance, the soul, is material, seems direct and immediate. We are not, however, justified, according to Professor Huxley, in making this inference, because of our ignorance of matter and causation. But in forming the previous conclusion that all vital phenomena, including thought, are results of elementary properties of matter, he takes no account of this ignorance, although it is plainly suggested by the difficulty which he has acknowledged.

The materialist may fairly demand that if our ignorance presents no obstacle to the acceptance of the grand and general proposition it shall not be alleged as a sufficient reason for the rejection of one of its corollaries. He may say to the Professor,

The  
materialistic  
rejoinder.

"If you believe that life is the result of the interaction, mechanical, chemical, or electric, of lifeless material elements, although you have no proof that such interaction ever produced life, or can take place without a living agency, why should you not believe that thought, the chief activity of life, which you say is the expression of molecular changes in the matter of life, is the action of a purely material substance, although you cannot trace the relation between cause and effect, or between the material and spiritual?"

It is, however, certain that our ignorance of

matter, which the Professor fully recognises, and to which, in fact, in the interest of materialism, he makes appeal, involves a principle which must entirely invalidate the materialistic theory of life, thought, and spiritual being, and which suggests encouragement and consolation to those that maintain the old instinctive belief that mind is different from matter, and that mind and matter are due to that which is neither matter, nor force, nor law, nor necessity.

Principle involved in the acknowledgment of ignorance.

If we attempt to reduce all existence to a material origin, we shall arrive at a conclusion which overthrows the foundation of materialism, and substitutes its very opposite—absolute idealism—in its room. Fixing our attention upon that inseparable compound without which, according to the materialistic theory, there can be nothing, and besides and beyond which there is nothing—matter and force—we observe that every particle of matter is matter because it possesses the attributes of extension, impenetrability, and mobility. Of these attributes the two latter are due to force, or are exhibitions of force. Pure matter, then, becomes mere extension endued with force. But if it be admitted that all that is essential to matter is extension, then every particle of matter is nothing but a portion of space. And so the idea of matter vanishes entirely. Or if it be said that matter is the unknown subject of which extension, impene-

Materialism supplanted by idealism.



trability, and mobility are the attributes, then, since these attributes alone give us our perception and conception of matter as such, the subject underlying them, whatever it is, is not matter, but an inconceivable and necessarily immaterial principle of being.

Paul Janet  
on the  
significance  
of this  
conclusion.

M. Paul Janet with great clearness demonstrates the necessity and exhibits the significance of this conclusion :—

“If I am told,” he says, “that the molecule itself is not the ultimate element of matter, that beyond the molecule there is a something, and that this something is absolute and independent, I reply that this is very possible, but that in this case we give up what I call materialism for another hypothesis which is not here in question. The molecule is the ultimate representative of matter that is possible or conceivable : whatever is beyond is some other thing ; it is no longer matter, but another principle which is conceivable by abstract thought alone, and which we may call idea, substance, force, as we please, but no longer matter. Matter is that which is presented to me by the senses ; that which is beyond and out of the range of my senses and immediate experience, is not matter. In what I call a body I can easily, it is true, resolve certain qualities into other qualities ; secondary qualities into primary ; smell, taste, colour, into form and motion ; but, as long as there remains anything of which I have a perception, it is still a body, and when I say that everything is body and matter I mean that everything is reducible to elements more or less similar to those which are perceived by my senses. But if in what I perceive by my senses everything is phenomenal, everything is mere appearance, if the basis of the object of sense is absolutely different from the object itself, I say that this object of sense which I call matter is relative only, and reduced to a superior principle, the power and value of which I can no longer estimate by means of my senses. Matter then vanishes in a principle superior to itself, and materialism abdicates in favour of idealism.”

Le Matérial-  
isme Con-  
temporaire  
en Alle-  
magne,  
chap. iv.

This conclusion is not urged in the interest of

idealism, for the purpose of proving that matter has no existence. On the contrary, the reasoning by which materialism is thus reduced to a contradiction of itself is founded upon the evidence of the senses, which report to us the existence of something presented to them, and not resulting from them, our perception of which as so attained, satisfies us that what we perceive is an objective reality different from ourselves. But what we insist upon is that we are compelled to believe, even by following out materialistic principles and premisses, that matter has a dependent and derived existence, and that that from which it is derived, and upon which its reality depends, is not matter. We need not argue the case of force. All materialists agree in denying its independence, and assert that there can be no force without matter, as no matter without force. Force, therefore, like matter, is dependent and derived; it originates in that which is not force. There is no mechanical basis of force, as there is no material basis of matter.

The conclusion not urged in the interest of idealism.

The reasoning founded in the evidence of the senses.

Matter dependent and derived.

So is force

If, then, materialism is incapable of explaining matter itself, we may reasonably conclude with M. Janet that

Application of the principle of ignorance.

*"a fortiori* it cannot explain the two still greater mysteries presented by nature—that is to say, life and thought."

The doctrine that the existence and properties of matter supply all that is necessary for the develop-

ment of life and thought is no longer tenable when we find that something beside and essentially different from matter is necessary to its existence.

Examination  
of the  
constitution  
of matter,  
leads to  
the same  
result.

The same result will be found to follow from the consideration of the elementary constitution of matter; and equally whether we acknowledge its infinite divisibility, or adopt the hypothesis, so useful for practical purposes, of the indivisibility of its ultimate particles or atoms.

Moleschott  
and  
Büchner.

The most advanced school of materialism, represented by the German writers, Moleschott and Büchner, rejects the atomic theory almost universally adopted by modern physiologists, and maintains that every particle of matter is in reality, as in conception, divisible. It is, therefore, a compound, and every compound has necessarily a relative and dependent existence. Its existence depends upon that of its constituent parts. But each of these is also a compound; and so on in infinite series. Whatever, therefore, may be the final absolute condition of the existence of matter, it is plain that it cannot be material, since whatever is material must be relative and dependent. And so with regard to force. The force of every particle is the resultant of the forces of its constituent particles; an absolute force, one, that is, not resolvable into component forces, being nowhere to be found. Therefore the existence of force depends ultimately upon something which is not force.

Dalton's great discovery of definite proportions demonstrates, in the opinion of most men of science, the existence of ultimate indivisible particles of matter. Every molecule, or elementary constituent of any kind of matter is, on his theory, an aggregate of smaller parts called atoms, which are severally uncombined, and, as their name imports, indivisible. But by their indivisibility must be meant not that they are actually without parts, but that their parts are inseparable one from another; not that they are essentially and absolutely indivisible, but that such is the constitution of nature that they are never divided.

Dalton.

Ultimate  
indivisibility  
of particles.

For atoms are of different weights: the weight of an atom of oxygen is eight times that of an atom of hydrogen; and the weight of a body is dependent upon its mass; we cannot then avoid the conclusion that an atom of oxygen contains eight times as much matter as an atom of hydrogen, that its eighth part is as heavy as an atom of hydrogen, and that therefore it has parts. Atoms are also, as Professor Tyndall says,

Atoms are  
of different  
weights.

"probably of different sizes; at all events it is almost certain that the ratio of the mass of the atom to the surface it presents to the action of the waves of light is different in different cases."

Article on  
Chemical  
Rays in the  
*Fortnightly  
Review*,  
February,  
1869.

If an atom has a surface extended over more space than the surface of another atom, there must be points on that surface distant from each other; and, therefore, by the action of a sufficient power, such

An atom is  
a compound.

Conclusion  
from it, as  
before, that  
matter is  
dependent  
and derived.

The atomic  
theory  
proves a  
supreme  
will.

an atom would be divisible. An atom, then, is, like a molecule, an aggregate, a compound consisting perhaps, of perfectly homogeneous parts, but still having parts, and these also having parts, and so on without limit. Consequently, the existence of the atom is relative and dependent; and therefore the atomic theory fails to establish the independent and absolute existence of matter.

If it be said that the terms weight and surface are not to be understood when applied to the ultimate elements of matter, in the same sense as when applied to its particles appreciable by the senses, we repeat the remark of M. Janet, that then we are dealing with something totally different from what we know or conceive as matter, an unknown something, a principle which, whatever it may be, is certainly not material.

There are other considerations arising out of the atomic theory which are worthy of some attention. If the ultimate elements of all substances are particles which, although not essentially indivisible since they are aggregates consisting of parts, are yet actually, and as a matter of fact, uniformly indivisible, such an arrangement cannot be conceived of as necessary, but must be conceived of as arbitrary. It amounts to a contradiction in terms to say that non-essential indivisibility depends upon necessity; it must depend upon will.

Again, if the constituent atoms of a molecule are



practically and actually indivisible, though they are composite, and this indivisibility is a condition of the constitution of nature, and since, therefore, nature would not be nature if any conceivable force existing in nature, could sever the atom into its parts, it follows that there is no conceivable force existing in nature which could condense those parts into their present inseparable state, and which can maintain them in it. If there is no possibility in nature, as it is, for the one, there is no possibility in nature, as it is, for the other. Hence the actual indivisibility of these particles is due to something which is not nature, nor in nature, something beyond and different from everything which we experience or conceive of as force. This is a power of which matter and force may be creations, but of which they are certainly not representatives, and with which they have no conceivable affinity.

Proof of a power external to matter and force.

It appears, then, that our ignorance of matter and force, pleaded by Professor Huxley in defence of the materialistic theory of life and thought, when pursued into its darkest recesses, renders necessary the conclusion that matter and force do not originate in anything which is of their own nature, and that therefore their continued existence and action do not depend upon ultimate elements which are material and mechanical.

Matter and force could not be self-originated.

But the fundamental difficulty of materialism arising from our ignorance of matter occurs not for

The fundamental difficulty of materialism does not occur for the first time at the last stage of inquiry.

the first time at the last stage of the inquiry into the basis of all objects of sense. It was encountered, as we have seen, in the attempt to trace to its origin the connection of life with matter. For when it was ascertained that the material constituents of living substances cannot, by mere combination and interaction, produce life, but that life in its lowest forms depends upon previously existing life, it was already time to acknowledge the incompetency of matter and force to account for the phenomena of life, and to recognize the presence and the power of an element of life which is certainly not material. The result arrived at by subsequent investigation, viz., that matter and force do not contain in themselves the principle of their own existence, but that they also depend upon something that is beyond them and not of them, is more than an analogy to this conclusion, it is essentially connected with it; and it is impossible to evade its significance as to the immaterial origin both of life and matter.

### III.

Laws of nature.

Let us pass now from the constitution of matter to the consideration of what are called "laws of nature," or, by the more advanced materialists, "necessity," names given to conditions under which the properties of matter act, and have come

into action, so as to produce the phenomena of the universe. Given matter and force, space and time, then, according to the materialistic philosophy, nothing more is required to construct a world. The molecules of matter, under the impulse of molecular force, must so act by the operation of law or necessity as to originate combinations, the results of which through a series of developments are—all existing forms. All that is needed is sufficient time for the process, and of that, in a past eternity during which matter has been in existence, there is of course an unlimited supply.

Requirements for the construction of a world, according to Materialism.

But it is here, in the first conditions for the operation of law, that materialism suffers shipwreck, as before, in the first conditions for the existence of matter or force. Supposing, for example, the matter of which our system is composed to have been, in its normal state, an extremely diffuse nebulosity, a mass of incandescent vapour or gas (a hypothesis by no means exclusively materialistic, though accepted by every materialist), the commencement of the present order of things must have been the formation of a central nucleus, and its acquisition of a rotatory movement.

Materialism suffers shipwreck in the first conditions for the existence of matter or force.

Let us date as far back as we please the transition from the normal state of uniform or irregular diffusion to this incipience of organisation, no reason can be assigned by the materialist why this transition had not occurred any number of ages

Creation unaccounted for by the operation of law.

Materialism  
can give no  
reason why  
our system  
did not  
arrive at its  
present  
condition at  
an earlier  
period.

previously. It has taken from that point of time to this to bring the matter composing our system into its present condition. Materialism can give no reason why it had not arrived at its present condition by the time whence we date the commencement of the process of which the present condition is the result. There are discovered by the telescope numerous masses of nebulous matter, some apparently in the entirely diffused state, some possessing nuclei already formed, all probably destined to become systems like our own—suns, planets, and satellites, worlds of organised and inorganic substances. Now, the matter of which they are composed, like that of our system, has, according to the materialist, been in existence from eternity, and the laws of nature are equally eternal. What has retarded the formation of these masses into systems? What has determined their various stages of progression?—and what is to account for the advanced state of the solar system?

It cannot be said that the operation of law which produced the initial nucleus or initial rotation in any case, was a necessary result of a previous series of operations or developments, extending backwards into a past eternity; for this would apply to all matter alike, all being eternal, and subject to the same eternal laws; and therefore every mass of matter would be at any period

in the same stage and condition. There would be no reason, from the operation of fixed and necessary laws, for the commencement of one system which would not be equally valid for the commencement of every other at the same time.

Chance, the old Epicurean doctrine of the fortuitous concourse of atoms, is, with apparent seriousness, relied upon by some men of science, even in the present day, as sufficient to account for the origination of a system of worlds. But what is chance? What action or movement can exist, or be imagined, which is not in sequence to some previous action or movement, and in some relation to it which could be represented by what we call a law? And so we are thrown back upon the difficulty offered by the eternal existence and operation of law. But, adopting the mathematical notion of chance, that is, probability, let us say that certain combinations of circumstances in the relations among the particles of matter are required for the production of the nucleus of a system of worlds, and that there is a certain amount of probability of their occurrence. One such combination has resulted in the production of the nucleus of our system. But the conditions necessary to, and occasioning its occurrence, at any date, cannot fail to have existed repeatedly in the eternal past antecedently to that date. The existence of so many millions of systems each, upon

Chance cannot account for creation.

The difficulty of the eternal existence and operation of law.

Why were not existing systems not originated much earlier?



The doctrine  
of the  
eternity of  
matter fatal  
to the  
doctrine of  
evolution.

the chance hypothesis, due to such a fortuitous combination, corroborates the conclusion arrived at by abstract reasoning, that, in the case of every separate mass of matter, the formation of which into a system commenced at any definite period, the probabilities were immensely in favour of the commencement of the process many times over before that period. Whenever it began, it ought to have begun before. In fact, the doctrine of the eternity of matter is fatal to the doctrine of evolution.<sup>1</sup>

That combinations and developments of matter may begin at different periods, and may be in different stages, is only possible and conceivable on the supposition that the different masses of matter in which they take place came into existence at different periods. They must have had each a normal condition, and that at different times. The normal condition of the more advanced must have preceded that of the less advanced by the number of ages necessary to bring the latter into the present condition of the former. And a normal condition is necessarily, by its definition, the primary condition of existence, that which had no predecessor from which it was evolved, that before which was—nothing.

These considerations lead us to the conclusion

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* Godless evolution—evolution supposed to be directed by law without will.

that the operation of law in the construction of the system of nature depends upon something which is not law; that the operation of chance to the same effect, supposing it to be distinguishable from that of law, requires conditions which are independent of chance. Matter and force we found could not exist except by the agency of something which is not matter or force. And now we find that something which is not law must determine action according to law, and something which is not chance must limit the range of probabilities. In a word, we are shut up to the necessity of believing in a creative power, and a determining and directing will, that is, an immaterial, conscious, intelligent, personal Being, the Author and Designer of nature—an omnipotent and omniscient God.

The system of nature depends on something that is not law.

We are shut up to the necessity of believing in a creative power.

#### IV.

Upon the materialistic theory, consciousness, intelligence, thought, and moral sense, are but the highest developments of the faculty by which the lichen draws nutriment from the air or the rock. The conscious, intelligent, thinking, moral being is as much a material substance as the lichen. Its intellectuality is due to the organisation to which it has attained, that is, to a certain combination of its material elements, and the forces with which they are endowed. Consequently, when, in each

Immortality denied by materialism.

Materialism  
renders  
immortality  
inconceiv-  
able.

particular instance or product, the organisation ceases to act, and the combination is dissolved, the result of the organisation and combination, that is, the separate individual intelligence—what we call mind or soul—vanishes entirely. So that materialism necessarily denies the immortality of the soul ; in fact, renders it inconceivable.

Evolution of  
immortal  
being  
impossible.

Evolution  
must  
proceed step  
by step.

The evolutionist, who refuses to be bound by the materialistic conditions of evolution, may perhaps maintain that the human being has attained to immortality by a process of development, as it has attained to a life of consciousness, thought, and moral feeling.<sup>1</sup> But we are immediately arrested by a difficulty which inevitably arises out of the notion of such a development. It is essential to the very fact of development that the highest condition attained should be but a step from one next below it, should indeed be evolved from it. What is the condition of limited existence next lower than immortality? It is as impossible for such a con-

<sup>1</sup> Sir C. Lyell in his *Antiquity of Man*, chap. xxiv., as quoted by Professor Mozley in his Bampton Lectures (on Miracles) Lect. iii. note 3, says :—" If, in conformity with the theory of progression, we believe mankind to have risen slowly from a rude and humble starting-point, such leaps (in intelligence) may have successively introduced not only higher and higher forms and grades of intellect, but at a much remoter period may have cleared at one bound the space which separated the highest stage of the unprogressive intelligence of the inferior animals from the first and lowest form of improveable reason manifested by man." But, as the Professor truly remarks, "such a leap is only another word for an inexplicable mystery. Such a change cuts asunder the identity of the being which precedes it and the being which succeeds it."

dition to exist as for a number to be found next less than infinity. Personal immortality, therefore, must be as entirely a separate independent creation, or endowment, as we have ascertained life itself in its origin to have been.

Eminent materialists of the last generation accepted the doctrine of Cabanis, that thought is a secretion of the brain, just as bile is a secretion of the liver. But modern materialism rejects this doctrine, and affirms that thought is not matter which the brain produces, but the very action of the brain itself. It is described as the resultant of forces that exist in the brain, or, according to Moleschott, "thought is a movement of matter." If so, then thought is the action of the molecules which compose the brain of the ultimate atoms which are the constituents of these molecules. And this action, whether originating in the mutual attraction and repulsion of those atoms, or in a material impulse communicated from without, must be regulated by the ordinary laws of motion. And if thought is the motion of certain molecules, this motion must, as such, determine the character and quality of thought, and be mechanically appropriate to its various applications. The character and quality of thought must, therefore, depend upon the magnitude and direction of molecular force, and vary according to the form of its line of action. This inference is inevitable: Given that

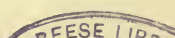
Materialistic doctrine of thought.

Brain secretion.

Contrary opinion.

Brain action.

Inevitable inference.



the thinking substance is material, that thinking is the movement of its particles, that every thought is the resultant of forces acting upon those particles, then every thought must have a particular intensity of mechanical force, and a particular direction in space, and there is nothing to distinguish it from another thought except the difference in intensity and direction.

Results of  
this doctrine.

The laws which regulate rectilinear and curvilinear motion must therefore be the laws which regulate thought. And thoughts will be right or wrong, true or false, good or bad, according to their direction in space, and the linear form in which they move—circular, elliptical, or parabolical, or any of the endless variety of curves. Hence the treatises with which mathematical students are familiar on the dynamics of a single particle may be expected to have an important bearing upon mental science when established upon materialistic principles. The formulæ of these treatises must necessarily express, if we could but interpret them, laws or conditions of thought.

Disclaimed  
by Huxley

It is possible that those who have adopted the materialistic creed, "There is nothing but matter, force, and necessity," may accept these conclusions. It is obvious that they must, if they would claim credit for simple consistency. For, according to this creed, all action of mind must be action of matter, and there can be no laws of mind which



are not laws of matter, and therefore all the known laws of matter must act upon mind, and produce its phenomena. Professor Huxley rejects and reprobates this creed. He will not tell us that mind is matter, or that thought is nothing but a movement of matter, or that the soul is material. But if we understand him aright, he would have us pursue our psychological inquiries on the hypothesis that these propositions are true. He says,

“With a view to the progress of science, the materialistic terminology is in every way to be preferred ;”

But disclaimer not consistent.

and again,

“There can be but little doubt that the further science advances the more extensively and consistently will all the phenomena of nature be represented by materialistic formulæ and symbols.”

What is to be inferred from these statements but that the investigations of mental science, the study of the nature and attributes of mind, ought to be conducted on strictly mechanical and mathematical principles, and the world of thought considered as subject to the same conditions of existence and action as the material world? There needs not the absurdity which, as we have just seen, is involved in the necessary conclusions to which we are brought by this demand, to convince the intelligent, honest, and earnest thinker, unbiassed and unembarrassed by theories, of its utterly impracticable character.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “All this show of philosophy is pure illusion. No mind that is capable of consistent thought can bring the forms and phrases

Atomic  
theory  
consistent  
with theism.

It would be unjust and unreasonable to assume that all who maintain the atomic theory of the constitution of the universe are absolute materialists, denying that there is any original and necessary existence except that of matter and force. On the contrary, there is reason to believe that those very ancient physiologists who first broached the doctrine of elementary atoms applied it only to sensible substances, and fully admitted the existence of incorporeal substances distinct from matter, and principles of life and thought distinct from the qualities and powers of matter. Dr. Cudworth, the author of *The Intellectual System of the Universe*, has investigated this subject with profound learning, and affirms that he has

Cudworth.

“made it evident that those atomical physiologers that were before Democritus and Leucippus were all of them incorporealists, joining theology and pneumatology, the doctrine of incorporeal substance and a Deity with their atomical physiology.”

He also contends, with much force of reasoning,

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of physical science into relationship with the processes, or the varying conditions of the mind.

“Mind and matter must each have its philosophy to itself. The modes of reasoning proper to the one can only be delusive if carried over to the other. That this is the fact might very safely be inferred from what hitherto has been the issue, without an exception, of the many ingenious theories propounded with the intention of laying open the world of mind by the help of chemistry, or any of those sciences that are properly called physical. Every theory resting upon this basis has presently gone off into some quackery—noised for a while among the uneducated, and soon forgotten.”—Isaac Taylor, *World of Mind*, cviii.

from considerations similar to those which we have alleged, that the

“intrinsic constitution of this (the atomical) physiology is such that, whosoever entertains it, if he do but thoroughly understand it, must of necessity acknowledge that there is something in the world beside body.”

Book I,  
chap. i.

The following is his summary of the opinions of the earlier and better atomical physiologists, opinions which were very clearly his own, and which prove how thoroughly he understood the theories of modern materialism, and the true reasons for rejecting them :—

His  
summary of  
the opinions  
of the earlier  
and better  
atomical  
physiologists.

“Our ancient atomists never went about, as the blundering Democritus afterwards did, to build up a world out of mere passive bulk and sluggish matter, without any active principles or incorporeal powers ; understanding well that thus they could not have so much as motion, mechanism, or generation in it ; the original of all that motion that is in bodies springing from something that is not body, that is, from incorporeal (immaterial) substance. And yet if local motion could have been supposed to have risen up, or sprung in upon this dead lump and mass of matter, nobody knows how, and, without dependence upon any incorporeal being, to have actuated (acted upon) it fortuitously, these ancient atomists would still have thought it impossible for the corporeal (material) world itself to be made up, such as it now is, by fortuitous mechanism, without the guidance of any higher principle. But they would have concluded it the greatest impudence, or madness, to assert that animals also consisted of mere mechanism, or that life and sense, reason and understanding, were really nothing else but local motion, and consequently that (they) themselves were but mere machines and automata. Wherefore they joined both active and passive principles together, the corporeal and incorporeal nature, mechanism and life, atomology and pneumatology ; and from both these united they made up one entire system of philosophy correspondent with and agreeable to the true and real world without them. And this system of philosophy, thus

Book I,  
chap. i. 41.

consisting of the doctrine of incorporeal substance (whereof God is the head) together with the atomical and mechanical physiology seems to have been the only genuine perfect and complete (system)."

Modern  
materialism  
*not* modern,  
but  
antiquated.

Ancient  
theories  
revived.

His strictures, in a later part of the work, on the most advanced school of materialists in his day, are singularly applicable to the revived theories of Democritus and Epicurus, which find so much favour with some of our modern physicists, and show that there is nothing in them new or original, and that they have no claim to be received as the results of the progress and discoveries of the science of the nineteenth century:—

Cudworth's  
strictures

"But as for that prodigious paradox of atheists, that cogitation itself is nothing but local motion, or mechanism, we could not have thought it possible that any man should have given entertainment to such a conceit, but that this was rather a mere slander raised upon atheists, were it not certain, from the records of antiquity, that whereas the old religious atomists did, upon good reason, reduce all corporeal action (as generation, augmentation, and alteration) to local motion or translation from place to place (there being no other motion beside this conceivable in bodies), the ancient atheisers of that philosophy (Leucippus and Democritus) not contented herewith, did really carry on the business still further, so as to make cogitation itself nothing but local motion. And it is also certain that a modern atheistic pretender to wit,<sup>1</sup> hath publicly owned the same conclusion, *that mind is nothing else but local motion in the organic parts of man's body*. These men have been sometimes, indeed, a little troubled with the fancy, apparition, or seeming, of cogitation, that is, the consciousness of it, as knowing not well what to make thereof, but then they put it off again, and satisfy themselves worshipfully with this, that fancy is but fancy, but the reality of cogitation nothing but local motion; as if there were not as much reality in fancy and consciousness as there is in local motion. That which inclined these men so

<sup>1</sup> Hobbes. Physic. Chap. xxv. Leviathan Pt. 1, Chap. i. ii.

much to this opinion was only because they were sensible and aware of this, that if there were any other action besides local motion admitted, there must needs be some other substance acknowledged beside body. Cartesius (Descartes) indeed undertook to defend (maintain) brute animals to be nothing else but machines; but then he supposed that there was nothing at all of cogitation in them, and consequently nothing of true animality or life, no more than is in an artificial automaton, as a wooden eagle or the like; nevertheless this was justly thought to be paradox enough. But that cogitation itself should be local motion, and men nothing but machines, this is such a paradox as none but a stupid and besotted, or else an enthusiastic, bigotical or fanatic atheist could possibly give entertainment to. Nor are such men as these fit to be disputed with any more than a machine is."

Chap. v.

Descartes above mentioned, the well-known French philosopher, perhaps the most eminent philosopher of the seventeenth century, held that all space was originally occupied by matter of a uniform nature, divisible into innumerable parts, all in motion; and constructed a theory of the origin of the universe from matter in motion, very similar to that of Epicurus, or modern materialists. But he freely acknowledged the necessity, not only of God's causing motion for the origination of the universe, but of his conserving motion in it for its sustentation. The hypothesis of the evolution of the existing universe from matter in motion did not, therefore, seem to him to exclude, but on the contrary, did seem to require, the existence and agency, primary and constant, of a spiritual principle distinct from matter and motion.

Descartes.

The necessity of Divine origination and preservation acknowledged by him.

Sir Isaac Newton was inclined to believe in the



Newton inclined to believe in the atomic constitution of the original matter of the universe.

atomic constitution of the original matter of the universe. He wrote in his *Optics*—

“It seems probable to me, that God in the beginning formed matter in solid, massy, hard, impenetrable, moveable particles, of such sizes and figures, and with such other properties, and in such proportion to space, as most conduced to the end for which He formed them; and that these primitive particles, being solids, are incomparably harder than any porous bodies compounded of them, even so very hard as never to wear out or break to pieces.”

Book IV.  
p. 260.

He also speaks of these particles of matter as—

“perhaps of different densities and forces.”

His language almost identical with that of Lucretius.  
Book 1.  
503-564.

This language is almost identical with that of Lucretius, the chief exponent of the ancient materialistic and atheistic philosophy. But we are quite sure that the doctrine which it expresses is not necessarily connected with the materialism which denies all primary existence except that of matter and its movements, or with the atheism avowed by Lucretius, and implicitly taught by the modern professors of the Epicurean system. For it was not connected with such materialism in the mind of Newton, who, as we have seen, in a passage before referred to, would not allow that matter possessed any inherent capability of action, or that by matter and its properties the phenomena of attraction, electricity, light, heat, sensation, and the voluntary movements of animal bodies, could be accounted for. Still less was it connected, in his judgment, with atheism; for, as in the passage last

The doctrine not necessarily atheistic.

Newton ascribes the formation of matter to the act of God.

quoted, he ascribes the formation of matter to the act of God, so elsewhere, repeatedly, in his most scientific writings, he recognises the necessarily existing deity as the original cause and continual support of all things that are. No mind was ever so intimately and profoundly conversant as his with the subject of matter and motion. The intellect which grasped the idea of the primary force which rules the movements of all bodies of the universe, which measured it and discovered its laws, was capable, beyond that of any other man, of realising the constitution of force in the abstract, and the extent and modes of its operation. Yet that intellect utterly rejected the conception of force as dependent upon matter, or as independent of the will and action of God. On the contrary, Newton's contemplation of matter and force, sustained throughout the composition of the most wonderful of all mathematical works, the *Principia*, in which he revealed and demonstrated his discoveries, led him to close it by a formal and solemn acknowledgment of the creation and conservation of the universe by the will and power of an almighty personal Being. With his profession of his philosophical creed we may suitably conclude the strictures we have offered on the modern materialism which would banish from philosophy and science all consideration of final causes, or of God:—

The conception of force as independent of the will and action of God utterly rejected by Newton.

“This admirably beautiful structure of sun, planets, and

The  
philosophical  
freed of  
Newton.

comets, could not have originated except in the wisdom and sovereignty of an intelligent and powerful Being. He rules all things, not as the soul of the world, but as the Lord of all. He is eternal and infinite, omnipotent and omniscient ; that is, His duration is from eternity to eternity, and His presence from infinity to infinity. He governs all things, and has knowledge of all things that are done or can be done. He is not eternity and infinity, but eternal and infinite. He is not duration and space, but He is ever, and is present everywhere. We know Him only by means of His properties and attributes, and by means of the supremely wise and infinite constructions of the world, and their final causes : we admire Him for His perfection ; we venerate and worship Him for His sovereignty. For we worship Him as His servants ; and a God without sovereignty, providence, and final causes is nothing else than fate and nature. From a blind metaphysical necessity which, of course, is the same always and everywhere, no variety could originate. The whole diversity of created things in regard to places and times could have its origin only in the ideas and the will of a necessarily existing Being."

*V. supra,*  
pp. 22-25.



THE PHILOSOPHY  
OF  
MR. HERBERT SPENCER  
EXAMINED.

BY THE  
REV. JAMES IVERACH, M.A.,  
AUTHOR OF "IS GOD KNOWABLE?"



THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:  
56, PATERNOSTER ROW; 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD; AND  
164, PICCADILLY.

## Argument of the Tract.

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AGNOSTICISM, a new word ; definition of its meaning. Reasons for taking Mr. Herbert Spencer as the typical Agnostic. Fundamental position of Mr. Spencer. His Agnosticism based on his doctrine of consciousness ; statement of that doctrine gathered from his works. Inadequacy of it, and the inconsistency between Mr. Spencer's analysis of consciousness, and his use of language. Consciousness cannot be resolved into states ; must belong to a personal being. We must regard consciousness as the consciousness of a being who feels, wills, thinks. Criticism of Mr. Spencer's *First Principles*. The attempt to make the ultimate generalizations of science into *a priori* intuitions of the mind is a failure, contradicted by scientific men, and by the experience of mankind. In discarding these intuitions which are universal and necessary, and in substituting in their place the ultimate generalizations of science, Mr. Spencer has been unreasonable and absurd. The Spencerian doctrine of the Unknowable founded on a misconception. The antinomies of Kant, and their solution. There are different kinds of being in the world. There are infinite being and finite being,—beings who are conscious, and beings who are unconscious ; and the antinomies cease to be contradictory when we recognise different orders of being. Conclusion that the action of our intelligence is true and trustworthy.



THE  
PHILOSOPHY OF MR. HERBERT SPENCER  
EXAMINED.

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AGNOSTICISM is a new word, lately introduced into the English language, for the purpose of expressing a certain attitude of mind. It is doubtful whether the word is an advantage, but it has become so popular that we are constrained to use it. At first sight it appears a very innocent word. What can be more innocent or more proper than to say, "I do not know," or "I do not know completely and thoroughly." If this were all, we should certainly have no controversy with the Agnostics. But Agnosticism has now come to have a larger meaning. It has advanced beyond the affirmation that our knowledge is partial and incomplete; and it has thrown doubt on the trustworthiness of our intelligence. It dogmatically affirms that true or real knowledge is impossible to man. It tends to destroy the foundation on which belief, knowledge, and action rest.

Agnosticism  
a new word

The  
necessity of  
using it.

The system  
throws  
doubt on  
the trust-  
worthiness  
of our  
intelligence.

The reality of knowledge does not involve the

The  
limitations  
of our  
knowledge.

The trust-  
worthiness  
of necessary  
beliefs.

The  
literature  
of Agnos-  
ticism.

Mr. H.  
Spencer  
acknow-  
ledged to  
be the  
greatest  
of the  
Agnostics.

omniscience of the person who knows. We may have to submit to ignorance because of lack of evidence; we may also have to submit to ignorance because we are finite beings. All that we need to contend for is that within the range of our faculties, and in the normal exercise of our powers, we may attain to real knowledge. The beliefs which are necessary to us are true and trustworthy, and have a true correspondence with the reality of things. We must trust the necessary beliefs, in correspondence with which we must think. Knowledge is one; and if at any one point the action of our intelligence is untrustworthy, it can never be trusted at all; and the result is self-contradiction and universal scepticism.

The literature of Agnosticism has grown to a great bulk, and for the sake of clearness, we have, in any discussion of it, to make a selection. We shall do no injustice to Agnosticism in taking the writings of Mr. Herbert Spencer as the chief exposition of the Agnostic view. He is recognised on all hands, and particularly by the Agnostics themselves, as their chief apostle. From the references to him and to his writings, which abound in current literature, we gather that the best presentation of the Agnostic view is to be found in his works. According to these references, Mr. Spencer with one hand has shut the door which seemed to lead the human mind into the region of the infinite and eter-

nal, and with the other hand has opened the gate which leads into the fruitful fields of positive knowledge. He is the "Modern Aristotle," who has unified our knowledge, and has accomplished for us, after the accumulated experience of two thousand years and more, what Aristotle had accomplished for the smaller world of knowledge of his time. No Agnostic, then, can complain when we take the writings of Mr. Spencer as typical of this intellectual movement. On their own showing he is the strongest, wisest of them all. They have called him "Our Philosopher." We proceed then to examine the argument for Agnosticism as set forth by Mr. Herbert Spencer.

His argument is briefly this: Emotion, volition, thought, are states of consciousness, and therefore cannot co-exist. Consciousness is formed of successive states, and to think of the Divine Being as possessing a consciousness, consisting of successive states, is to stop short with verbal propositions. We are using unreal words. It is quite true on the terms proposed by Mr. Spencer, we cannot speak of emotion, volition, thought, in relation to the Divine Being, any more than we can speak of them in relation to any being, if consciousness be only a series of states. We shall therefore discuss the subject in the following order:—

His  
argument.

The order  
of the dis-  
cussion.

I. We shall show by reference to the works of

Mr. Spencer, that he does resolve consciousness into a series of states.

II. We shall show that he is compelled to disregard his own analysis of consciousness, and to speak of mind as a being which experiences these states.

III. We shall show that the ultimate generalizations of science which Mr. Spencer elevates into first principles, have not these qualities of universality and necessity which first principles ought to have, and that we must return to those primary beliefs which he has discarded.

IV. We shall examine the grounds on which he propounds his doctrine of the Unknowable.

## I.

### MR. SPENCER'S DOCTRINE OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

Mr.  
Spencer's  
recent  
article our  
starting  
point.

We shall take, as the starting-point of our criticism, one of the latest utterances of Mr. Spencer, in which he has himself summarised for us the principles of his philosophy, and their bearings on religion. This summary, no doubt, presupposes a knowledge of the voluminous works of Mr. Spencer, and we shall have to refer to some of these in the course of this argument. Meanwhile

we extract from the article in question the following:—<sup>1</sup>

“All emotions can exist only in a consciousness that is limited. Every emotion has its antecedent ideas, and antecedent ideas are habitually supposed to occur in God : he is represented as seeing and hearing this or the other, and as being emotionally affected thereby. That is to say, the conception of a divinity possessing these traits of character, necessarily continues anthropomorphic : not only in the sense that the emotions ascribed are like those of human beings, but also in the sense that they form parts of a consciousness which, like the human consciousness, is formed of successive states. And such a conception of the divine consciousness is irreconcilable both with the unchangeableness otherwise alleged, and with the omniscience otherwise alleged. For a consciousness constituted of ideas and feelings caused by objects and occurrences cannot be simultaneously occupied with all objects and all occurrences throughout the universe. To believe in a divine consciousness, men must refrain from thinking what is meant by consciousness—must stop short with verbal propositions ; and propositions which they are debarred from rendering into thought will more and more fail to satisfy them. Of course, like difficulties present themselves when the will of God is spoken of. So long as we refrain from giving a definite meaning to the word will, we may say that it is possessed by the Cause of All Things, as readily as we may say that love of approbation is possessed by a circle ; but when from the words we pass to the thoughts they stand for, we find that we can no more unite in consciousness the terms of the one proposition than we can those of the other. Whoever conceives any other will than his own must do so in terms of his own will, which is the sole will directly known to him—all other wills being only inferred. But will, as each is conscious of it, presupposes a motive—a prompting desire of some sort ; absolute indifference excludes the conception of will. Moreover will, as implying a prompting desire, connotes some end contemplated as one to be achieved, and ceases with the achievement of it ; some other will referring to some other

His statement of the case of Agnosticism.

<sup>1</sup> “Religion ; a Retrospect and Prospect.” By Herbert Spencer. *Nineteenth Century*, January, 1884.



end, taking its place. That is to say, will, like emotion, necessarily supposes a series of states of consciousness. The conception of a divine will, derived from that of the human will, involves, like it, localization in space and time; the willing of each end excluding from consciousness for an interval the willing of other ends, and therefore being inconsistent with that omnipresent activity which simultaneously works out an infinity of ends. It is the same with the ascription of intelligence. Not to dwell on the seriality and limitation implied as before, we may note that intelligence as alone conceivable by us, presupposes existences independent of it and objective to it. It is carried on in terms of changes primarily wrought by alien activities,—the impressions generated by things beyond consciousness, and the ideas derived from such impressions. To speak of an intelligence which exists in the absence of all such alien activities, is to use a meaningless word. If to the corollary that the First Cause, considered as intelligent, must be continually affected by independent objective activities, it is replied that these have become such by act of creation, and were previously included in the First Cause: then the reply is that in such case the First Cause could, before this creation, have had nothing to generate in it such changes as those constituting what we call intelligence, and must therefore have been unintelligent at the time when intelligence was most called for. Hence it is clear that the intelligence ascribed answers in no respect to that which we know by the name. It is intelligence out of which all the characters constituting it have vanished."

This is perhaps the strongest statement of the case for Agnosticism which we have been able to find. It appears again and again in the works of Mr. Spencer. On it he lays great stress, and he seems to regard it as more effective, if not more decisive, than the argument derived from the nature of the Infinite, the Absolute, and the Unconditioned, which bulk so largely in the opening chapters of the *First Principles*. The strength

Stress laid  
by Mr.  
Spencer  
on his  
analysis of  
conscious-  
ness

of the argument lies in the assumption that "consciousness cannot be in two states at the same time," that consciousness is formed of successive states, and is nothing but the succession of these states. It seems at first sight difficult to believe that such a position could be really held by a writer of the reputation of Mr. Spencer; all the more difficult it is when we read those parts of his voluminous works in which he does not deal directly with consciousness, but is using his consciousness as an instrument for the discovery of truth. He continually assumes that man has the power of looking before and after; that states of consciousness can be compared, classified, and arranged; and that somehow there is a principle of continuity in knowledge. We find a vivid contrast between what Mr. Spencer describes consciousness to be, and what consciousness is able to accomplish. He will not allow us to regard consciousness as anything but a series of successive states; while he continually uses language which implies a permanent self who is conscious of these states.

The strength of his argument is that consciousness cannot be in two states at the same time.

Inconsistency of his language.

The question is of such importance that we feel bound to make sure of the meaning of Mr. Spencer. It is difficult indeed to be sure, for the language he uses is by no means consistent with itself. Take the following from the *First Principles* :—

"Belief in the reality of self is, indeed, a belief which no hypothesis enables us to escape. What shall we say of these

Mr. Spencer's view that reason cannot justify the belief in the reality of the individual mind.

successive impressions and ideas which constitute consciousness? Shall we say that they are the affections of something called mind, which as being the subject of them, is the real *ego*? If we say this we manifestly imply that the *ego* is an entity."<sup>1</sup>

We need not quote the passage at greater length. It consists in showing first that we "must admit the reality of the individual mind," and second, that this belief admits of no justification by reason, nay, that "it is a belief which reason, when pressed for a distinct answer, rejects." Mr. Spencer tells us that

"The mental state in which self is known, implies like every other mental act, a perceiving subject and a perceived object. If then the object perceived is self, what is the subject that perceives? or if it is the true self which thinks, what other self can it be that is thought of? Clearly, a true cognition of self implies a state in which the knowing and the known are one—in which subject and object are one; and this Mr. Mansel rightly holds to be the annihilation of both. So that the personality of which each is conscious, and of which the existence is to each a fact beyond all others the most certain, is yet a thing which cannot truly be known at all; the knowledge of it is forbidden by the very nature of thought."<sup>2</sup>

Illustrations of this statement.

In almost all his writings, Mr. Spencer returns to this analysis of consciousness. To quote again from the passage on the freedom of the will—

"Considered as an internal perception, the illusion consists in supposing that at each moment the *ego* is something more than the aggregate of feelings and ideas, actual and nascent, which then exists. A man who, after being subject to an impulse consisting of a group of psychical states, real and ideal, performs a certain action, usually asserts that he determined to

<sup>1</sup> *First Principles*, p. 64.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 65, 66.

perform the action ; and by speaking of his conscious self as having done something separate from the group of psychical states constituting the impulse, is led into the error of supposing that it was not the impulse alone which determined the action. But the entire group of psychical states which constituted the antecedent of the action also constituted himself at that moment,—constituted his psychical self, that is, as distinguished from his physical self. It is alike true that he determined the action, and that the aggregate of his feelings and ideas determined it, since during its existence this aggregate constituted his then state of consciousness, that is, himself.”<sup>1</sup>

It is necessary to give attention to this view of Mr. Spencer, for it is the main foundation of the Agnostic position. On it he bases his argument as he unfolds it in the *Nineteenth Century*. It bears all the weight of the great inference that there can be no mind equal to the creation, maintenance, and government of the universe. To illustrate this point we make one more quotation :

Mr.  
Spencer's  
view  
the main  
foundation  
of the  
Agnostic  
argument.

“If, then, I have to conceive evolution as caused by an ‘Originating Mind,’ I must conceive this Mind as having attributes akin to those of the only mind I know, and without which I cannot conceive mind at all. I will not dwell on the many incongruities hence resulting by asking how the ‘Originating Mind’ is to be thought of as having states produced by things objective to it ; as discriminating among these states, and classing them as like and unlike, and as preferring one objective result to another. I will simply ask, What happens if we ascribe to the ‘Originating Mind’ the character absolutely essential to the conception of mind, that it consists of a series of states of consciousness ? Put a series of states of consciousness as cause, and the evolving universe as effect, and then endeavour to see the last as flowing from the first. It is possible to imagine in some dim kind of way a series of states of consciousness serving as antecedent to any one of the move-

<sup>1</sup> *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. I., pp. 500-501.

ments I see going on, for my own states of consciousness are often indirectly the antecedents to such movements. But how if I attempt to think of such a series as antecedent to all actions throughout the universe, to the motions of the multitudinous stars through space, to the revolution of all their planets around them, to the gyration of all these planets on their axes, to the infinitely multiplied physical processes going on in each of these suns and planets? I cannot even think of a series of states of consciousness as causing the relatively small group of actions going on over the earth's surface; I cannot even think of it as antecedent to all the winds and dissolving clouds they bear, to the currents of all the rivers and the grinding action of all the glaciers; still less can I think of it as antecedent to the infinity of processes simultaneously going on in all the plants that cover the globe, from tropical palms down to polar lichens, and in all the animals that roam among them, and the insects that buzz about them. Even to a single small set of these multitudinous terrestrial changes, I cannot conceive as antecedent a series of states of consciousness,—cannot conceive it as causing the hundred thousand breakers that are at this instant curling over the shores of England. How, then, is it possible for me to conceive an 'Originating Mind,' which I must represent to myself as a series of states of consciousness, being antecedent to the infinity of changes simultaneously going on in worlds too numerous to count, dispersed throughout a space which baffles imagination."<sup>1</sup>

Mr.  
Spencer's  
view  
of conscious-  
ness is  
deliberate.

We thus find that the view which Mr. Spencer takes of consciousness is deliberate. At various times, and in many ways he has declared that "consciousness cannot be in two distinct states at the same time." From the publication of the *First Principles*, in 1862, on to the publication of the article in the *Nineteenth Century*, he has never wavered in this assertion, and has made it the main

<sup>1</sup> *Popular Science Monthly*, July, 1872. Quoted in *The Philosophy of Herbert Spencer*, by B. P. Bowne, A.B., p. 117 8, 9. Phillips & Hunt, New York, 1881.



support of his agnosticism. The position has such grave consequences, not only with respect to religion, but to science, and to the possibility of knowledge generally, that it was necessary to set forth Mr. Spencer's view in his own words.

## II.

### MR. SPENCER'S DISREGARD OF HIS OWN ANALYSIS OF CONSCIOUSNESS.

It seems, however, that Mr. Spencer has the power of forgetting his own deepest views to an unusual degree. The consciousness which he has brought down to the vanishing point of a single state, has strange expansive power, and is equal to any demand made on it. In the first edition of the *First Principles* there is a preface containing in outline Mr. Spencer's "system of Philosophy." He there issues a prospectus of the various works which are to form the system. Most of these works have been published. Year by year Mr. Spencer has toiled, and we have before us a series of works which has carried into effect the purpose formed by him long ago. He claims to have reached conclusions of great generality and truth regarding all that can be known by man. In particular he believes himself to have unified our knowledge, and to have framed a formula, adequate to express all orders of change

What the consciousness of Mr. Spencer has been able to do.

in their general order, whether these changes be astronomic, geologic, biologic, psychologic, or sociologic. We must infer that this formula answers to a state of consciousness on the part of Mr. Spencer. - There can be no other conclusion, for "consciousness cannot be in two distinct states at the same time." We do not at present express our wonder at the assumption that a series of states of consciousness can conceive a law which can express all orders of change in itself and beyond itself. It is sufficiently marvellous: but our present purpose is to place the achievement of Mr. Spencer alongside of what he regards as inconceivable. He cannot conceive how a series of states of consciousness can be the antecedent of all the changes he knows to be going on in earth and sea and sky. Why not, if a single state of consciousness is equal to the construction and conception of the formula of evolution? If the law of all orders of change can be grasped in a single state of consciousness, why may not the changes themselves also be? That the law of evolution may be grasped by consciousness is manifest from the fact that Mr. Spencer complains of Professor Tait and Mr. Matthew Arnold, because, owing to defective training, they "are unable to frame ideas answering to the words in which evolution at large is expressed." It is possible, then, if we are rightly trained, to frame ideas which will correspond to

If a consciousness like Mr. Spencer's can do so much, what may not a greater consciousness effect?

the formula of evolution. But this is a great feat on the part of a consciousness which can only be in a single state at a time. If a single state can do so much, what may not the whole series be able to accomplish, more particularly if it should ever become aware of itself as a series. The states of consciousness of Mr. Spencer have been able to act as antecedent to all the feelings, volitions, thoughts, which have found expression in the volumes before us; may not there be other states of consciousness of a larger order equal to the production of changes on a greater scale? If Mr. Spencer would only consider what a burden he lays on a consciousness which can only exist in a single state at a time, he would do one of two things; either he would revise his description of consciousness, and make it more adequate to the task required of it, or he would despair of acquiring knowledge of any kind, and land himself in utter scepticism. At present the whole pyramid of his synthetic philosophy stands on the small end, and is poised in unstable equilibrium on a single state of consciousness, and must fall with the first breeze that blows.

We naturally ask if consciousness can only exist in a single state at a time, as Mr. Spencer constantly affirms, how it is possible for us to be conscious of more states than one? But Mr. Spencer as constantly affirms the latter as he does the former. "To be known as unlike," he says,

What Mr. Spencer would do if he considered the burden he lays on consciousness in a single state.

If consciousness be what Mr. Spencer says it is, reasoning is impossible.

“conscious states must be known in succession,” and he has no explanation of the puzzle how they can be. The only explanation we have been able to find is the following :—

“By a process of observation we find that our states of consciousness segregate into two independent aggregates, each held together by some principle of continuity within it. The principle of continuity, forming into a whole the joint states of consciousness, moulding and modifying them by some unknown energy, is distinguished as the ego ; while the non-ego is the principle of continuity holding together the independent aggregate of vivid states.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Spencer as an observer can do what he has said consciousness cannot do.

We shall perhaps find a clue to the inconsistencies of Mr. Spencer's reasoning if we look closely at this passage. For we have been utterly puzzled to discover how a single state of consciousness could compare, abstract, generalize, and perform the operations ascribed to it by Mr. Spencer. The key to the mystery will be found in the opening clause of the foregoing quotation : “by a process of observation we find” Mr. Spencer postulates a disinterested observer, who can look calmly down on consciousness, and as a “spectator” keep an account of the process of segregation into aggregates. The qualifications of this observer are of a most distinguished order. He can compare, remember,—in short, he has all the attributes which Mr. Spencer denies to the ego itself. For the most part Mr. Spencer

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology*, Vol. II., p. 487.

identifies himself with the disinterested observer who looks on, and keeps a register of the changes of the universe, and the law which regulates them. As such he is present at the rude beginnings of things; as such he observes all the successive differentiations and integrations which have taken place; as such he has marked the place where memory begins, and has set it down by the clock as the moment when the organic structure fails to correspond with the environment, and therefore brought memory to its help,—a feeble substitute, but a necessary one: as such he prophesies of a future when the correspondence between organism and environment will be again complete, and remembrance of the past shall be needed no more.

It is because he so often occupies the place of the disinterested observer that Mr. Spencer finds he can reduce the ego to a series of states of consciousness. If it were more than this, the result would be rather inconvenient for his philosophy. If he were compelled to regard consciousness as an agent, capable of interaction with other agents in a related world, he would have to widen his calculus, and could no longer hope to express all changes in terms of matter and motion. On the other hand, by regarding consciousness as a series of states, which are dependent for their existence and for the order of

Mr.  
Spencer's  
denial  
of per-  
sonality  
necessary  
for his  
system.



their succession on causes beyond themselves, he has been able to show a plausible possibility for the truth of his philosophy. But he purchases the possibility at a great cost. For there is not a single argument in any of Mr. Spencer's works, which does not imply the opposite of his deliberate and repeated statement that consciousness can only exist in a single state at a time. We may take any argument we like,—we may choose at random. Take the following from the chapter on "The Universal Postulate" :—

"If, having touched a body in the dark, and having become instantly conscious of some extension as accompanying the resistance, I wish to decide whether the proposition—'whatever resists has extension'—expresses a cognition of the highest certainty, how do I do it? I endeavour to think away the resistance. I think of resistance, and endeavour to keep extension out of thought. I fail absolutely in the attempt."<sup>1</sup>

Yet in the  
denying of  
it he  
affirms it.

One would like to ask Mr. Spencer how the mental operation described in the foregoing paragraph is possible. For he makes a distinction between himself, the thinking person, and the thoughts which he thinks. He distinguishes between himself and the states of consciousness which he has. He assumes that he can pass from one state of consciousness to another, and back again, and have a vivid feeling somehow of the likeness or unlikeness between the two. It would appear, therefore, that Mr. Spencer assumes that

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology*, Vol. II., pp. 406, 407.

consciousness can be in three states at the same time, if not in more. For every judgment involves at least three states: two states which are compared, and a third state which affirms the agreement or disagreement between the other two.

We are anxious to observe that this remark is based on the procedure of Mr. Spencer himself, while he is describing the process of reasoning, as a spectator, and apparently in forgetfulness of what he has said about consciousness. We are not unmindful of all that he has written regarding the genesis of consciousness, nor of the principle of association which he calls segregation. But no more in his hands than in the hands of Stuart Mill has the principle of association shown itself equal to the task laid upon it. For it is evident that, if the principle of the association were adequate to explain our mental life, we should never have been able to ask how and why ideas or states of consciousness associate themselves together. To ask such a question shows that we have somehow got beyond the principle of association, which would be impossible if association could explain everything. The theory of Mr. Spencer, which simply substitutes the experience of the race for the experience of the individual, has not altered in any degree the nature of the problem. Even if we were able to trace the steps by which consciousness grew to what it is at present, that would not help us much

The principles of association cannot explain our mental life.

in determining the nature of consciousness as it now is. Before entering on this topic, however, we shall seek to make it clear that Mr. Spencer's account of consciousness is inadequate. We mean, of course, his formal analysis of it. For when we pass from that, and have regard only to what consciousness is able to accomplish, we find in the works of Mr. Spencer ample testimony to self as a permanent activity, and to the synthetic unity of self-consciousness as the permanent unity, to which all the experiences we have is constantly referred. Conscious states—past, present, and future—are bound together and formed into unity, because they are states of the personal self, who knows itself as present in all the variety of its experience.

Quotation  
from Lotze.

Let us take in this relation the following quotation from Lotze:—

“To whatever act of thought we direct our attention, we never find that it consists in the mere presence of two ideas *a* and *b* in the same consciousness, but always in what we call a Relation of one idea to the other. After this relation has been established, it can in its turn be conceived as a third idea *C*; but in such case *C* is neither on the one hand homogeneous with *a* and *b*, nor is it a mere mechanical effect of interactions which in accordance with some definite law have taken place between the two as psychological processes with definite magnitudes and definitely various natures. We may take as the simplest examples of what I mean, the identification and the distinction of two ideal contents. If we assume *a* and *b* identical with each other, then unquestionably the idea *a* is present twice over in our mind; but the only result to which this circumstance can lead us, on mechanical analysis, will be either that the two ideas must count as one, because they exactly cover each other,

or that as similar affections of the soul they will become fused into a third idea of greater strength, or that they simply remain apart without any result at all. But that which we call the comparison of them, which leads to the idea of their identity *C*, consists neither in the mere fact of their co-existence, nor in their fusion : it is a new and essentially single act of the soul, in which the soul holds the two ideas side by side, passes from one to the other, and is conscious of experiencing no change in its condition, or in the mode of its action during or by reason of that passage from the one idea to the other.

“Again : let us compare two different ideas *a* and *b*, red and yellow. Two external *stimuli*, which acting by themselves would have awakened severally one of the two sensations, might acting simultaneously coalesce in the nerve, through which they propagate themselves still as physical states, into a third excitation intermediate between the two, so as to occasion in the soul only a third simple sensation. But two ideas which have once arisen as ideas in the soul never experience this sort of fusion. If it were to occur, if the distinctive experience of the two ideas were to vanish, all opportunity and possibility of comparison, and therewith as a remoter consequence, all possibility of thought and knowledge would vanish also. For clearly all relation depends upon preservation in consciousness of the different contents unfalsified by any interactions of one upon the other : the single undivided energy of thought which is to comprehend them must find them as they are in themselves, so that passing to and fro between them it may be conscious of the change which arises in its own condition in the transition.”<sup>1</sup>

This account of the nature of comparison differs from that of Mr. Spencer in only one respect. But the one point of difference is vital. Lotze postulates an active soul which can compare its ideas one with another, and affirm or deny their identity. But the postulate of Lotze, reasonable though it seems, evidently puts Mr. Spencer into

Differs from  
Mr. Spencer  
in one vital  
point.

<sup>1</sup> Lotze, *Logic*, p. 474. English Translation, Clarendon Press.

Self-know-  
ledge the  
postulate  
of all  
knowledge.

a state of uncontrollable alarm. "If we say this we manifestly imply that the ego is an entity." Well, suppose we do, what then? It will certainly have grave consequences for the philosophy of Mr. Spencer, but no other serious results which we can see. For it is the one postulate which makes knowledge and experience possible and intelligible, as it is the postulate on which Mr. Spencer continually acts, as we have seen, whenever he describes any process of thought. The only unity of experience which we can possibly have is that which refers all experience to a conscious self, which is the abiding subject of them all. For any possible theory of knowledge assumes the reality of self. If we are not sure of our own existence we are sure of nothing. We are certain of our own identity also; that we are ourselves and not some other. But this is the precise certainty which Mr. Spencer in terms denies, even while he recognizes the existence of self as constantly as any one can do.

One great difficulty which besets the critic of Mr. Spencer's philosophy lies in the fact that people will scarcely believe that he actually holds such opinions, unless they themselves are students of his works. Denying as he actually does the existence and activity of self, it is scarcely credible that he should as constantly affirm it. Yet so it is. If we take his chapter on "the Composition of



Mind," and read therein the way in which, according to him, mind is built up, we shall be surprised to find that mind is postulated to preside over its own genesis. For example:—

In Mr. Spencer's account of the genesis of mind, mind is postulated to preside over its own genesis and growth.

"To complete this general conception it is needful to say that as with feelings, so with the relations between feelings. Parted so far as may be from the particular pairs of feelings, and pairs of groups of feelings they severally unite, relations themselves are perpetually segregated. From moment to moment relations are distinguished from one another in respect of the degrees of contrast between their terms, and the kinds of contrast between their terms; and each relation, while distinguished from various concurrent relations, is assimilated to previously-experienced relations like itself."<sup>1</sup>

On the previous page he speaks of sensations being at once known as unlike other sensations that limit them in space and time. He speaks of sensations as known, and of relations as recognized before there is any conscious subject present to act in these capacities. For by his hypothesis he regards the subject as not yet built up nor come to consciousness—and yet the subject is present, active, knowing, recognising, segregating. He has to account for feeling, thought, memory, and he accounts for them by a theory which at the same time affirms and denies the activity of thought and of the thinking being. When we question Mr. Spencer further as to the origin of all these changes, which go to form the ego, we find no other account than

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology*, Vol. I., p. 163.

this, that the principle of segregation lies not in the conscious subject, but in the nervous system. On the nervous system, as it has been developed through all the past, lies the burden of accounting for all the states of mind, and for all the processes of thinking. He sometimes seems to attribute to the nervous system the power of recognising relations of appreciating differences, and of storing up memories, which most other philosophers regard as operations of the conscious ego. Even if we attribute to nerve vesicles this extraordinary power we simply remove the difficulty one step further back, and we get no nearer a solution of the problem; and we have the added absurdity of attributing to the nervous system all the results and characteristics of mind.

We return now to the statement of Mr. Spencer in his recent article.<sup>1</sup> We have seen that the formal doctrine that consciousness is formed of successive states, is repeated by Mr. Spencer in almost all his works, and we have seen also that he is, notwithstanding, constrained to speak as if he believed in a self distinct from, and cognisant of, all the successive states of consciousness. Suppose that instead of using the phrase "successive states of consciousness," we were to use the phrase conscious self in the extract quoted above, Mr. Spencer's argument becomes meaningless.

Mr. Spencer's argument meaningless if, for states of consciousness, we substitute "conscious self," "conscious person."

<sup>1</sup> *Nineteenth Century*, January, 1884.

“Such a conception of the divine consciousness is irreconcilable both with the unchangeableness otherwise alleged, and with the omniscience otherwise alleged. For a consciousness constituted of ideas and feelings caused by objects and occurrences, cannot be simultaneously occupied with all objects and all occurrences throughout the universe.”

We purpose to construct a parallel sentence : Illustration.  
 “The conception of a consciousness which is formed of successive states, is irreconcilable with the permanence otherwise claimed, and with the knowledge otherwise claimed by Mr. Spencer. For a consciousness constituted of ideas and feelings caused by objects and occurrences cannot have been simultaneously occupied with, or even successively occupied with the thoughts contained in his works. To believe in Mr. Spencer as the permanent subject who produced all these works, would be to stop short with verbal propositions.” A similar series of propositions may readily be framed to run parallel with all the other propositions in the quoted paragraph, and the result would be that we have no right to speak of emotion, of will, or of intelligence in connection with Mr. Spencer. We cannot speak of him without attributing to him a selfhood which has persisted from the publication of the *First Principles* onward, and this is precisely what he will not permit us to do. Still we can hardly be sure even of this, for we remember that the persistence of force rests for final proof on the persistence of consciousness ; “and our inability to

conceive matter and motion suppressed, is our inability to suppress consciousness itself." Consciousness cannot be suppressed, and persists, it would appear, and yet can only be in a single state at a time!

We may, however, be allowed to exhaust the possibility of the known before we take refuge in the unknowable. We are entitled to try what can be accomplished by a knowing subject who knows itself as an agent in all the forms of its activity, before we pass into the unknown, and postulate an energy which is the hypothetical cause of our conscious states. No one ever laid stronger stress on the separation between subject and object than Mr. Spencer has. It is an antithesis which according to him can never be transcended; and yet Mr. Spencer constantly transcends this antithesis, and identifies the two in the unknowable energy in which we live and move and have our being. We can only speak of matter, he tells us, in terms of mind, and of mind in terms of matter; and this he maintains, while he also maintains that there can be no resemblance between a feeling and a motion, or between a thought and a material fact. The passage we now quote is exceedingly curious:—

Incon-  
sistencies  
of Mr.  
Spencer.

“No effort of imagination can enable us to think of a shock, however minute, except as undergone by an entity. We are compelled, therefore, to postulate a substance of mind that is affected before we can think of its affections. But we can form no notion of a substance of Mind absolutely divested of attributes

connoted by the word substance; and all such attributes are abstracted from our experience of material phenomena. Expel from the conception of mind every one of these attributes by which we distinguish an external something from an external nothing, and the conception of mind becomes nothing. If to escape this difficulty we repudiate the expression 'state of consciousness,' and call each undecomposable feeling 'a consciousness,' we merely get out of one difficulty into another. A consciousness, if not the state of a thing, is itself a thing. And as many different consciousnesses as there are, so many different things there are. How shall we think of these so many independent things, having their differential characters, when we have excluded all conceptions derived from external phenomena?"<sup>1</sup>

The last question can be answered very simply. When we have excluded all conceptions derived from external phenomena, we can think of conscious persons in conceptions derived from internal phenomena. Usually we describe a thing in terms of the modes of its activity, and we say a thing is where it acts, and the qualities of a thing are the modes of its action. We therefore take one of the sentences in the above quotation, and amend it to read as follows:—"Expel from the conception of mind every one of the attributes by which we distinguish an external something from an external nothing, and the conception of mind will still retain that which is its essential characteristic. It will still be a thing which feels and thinks and wills. It will still remain conscious of itself, and have the power of looking before and after."

Conception of mind positive, not negative, and in terms of mind, not of matter.

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology*, Vol. I., p. 626.



This is indeed the final statement of Mr. Spencer's favourite theory, that our knowledge consists of equations worked out with symbols, which can never be known save as symbols. It is his final statement of the necessity which compels us to "find the value of  $x$  in terms of  $y$ , and of  $y$  in terms of  $x$ ," and to go on so for ever without coming nearer to a solution. But we have seen that when we abstract all that we have gained from material phenomena, we still have a conception of mind,—and a positive conception, not a negative,—which can be explained in terms of affections of mind itself, and which can be realized in consciousness.

Conscious-  
ness of self  
the key  
of the  
position.

We have dealt with this analysis of consciousness at some length, for it is the key of the position. And Mr. Spencer knows this to be true. Hence the great trouble he has taken, and hence also the necessity under which he lies of returning to the question again and again, in order to give fresh strength to the proof of it. The proof has failed in every essential particular. It cannot even be stated, except by implicitly affirming what is in terms denied. The pre-supposition of all knowledge is the knowledge of self; and the first unity of things is the unity which refers all things to a personal self, as the abiding subject of all possible experience.

### III.

#### MR. SPENCER'S FIRST PRINCIPLES NOT UNIVERSAL AND NECESSARY.

From this point onwards, we now proceed; and as we go on we shall find occasion to challenge the competency of Mr. Spencer's reasoning on many occasions. We find in particular, that Mr. Spencer's account of the forms of thought, and of the necessities of thought, to be most inadequate. The long controversy between associationalists and intuitionists has been decided, and decided in favour of the latter. As far as the individual is concerned, Mr. Spencer acknowledges that there are forms of intuition which are transcendental.

Mr.  
Spencer's  
account  
of the  
forms of  
thought.

"If at a birth there exists nothing but a passive receptivity of impressions, why is not a horse as educable as a man? Should it be said that language makes the difference, then why do not the cat and dog, reared in the same household, arrive at equal degrees and kinds of knowledge?"<sup>1</sup>

The question is unanswerable; but Mr. Spencer comes to the help of the associationalists, and endeavours to reconcile the traditional experience doctrine with the doctrine of true forms of thought. The reconciliation is attained through the widening of the meaning of experience. Mr. Spencer has indefinitely lengthened the time through which

Irrational  
and  
inadequate

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology*, Vol. I. p. 468.

experience may act, and through which habit may grow into necessity.

“The human brain is an organised register of infinitely numerous experiences received during the evolution of life, or rather during the evolution of that series of organisms through which the human organism has been reached. The effects of the most uniform and frequent of these experiences have been successively bequeathed, principal and interest, and have slowly mounted to that high intelligence which lies latent in the brain of the infant, which the infant in after-life exercises, and perhaps strengthens or further complicates, and which, with minute additions, it bequeaths to future generations.”<sup>1</sup>

The  
meaning  
of the  
proposition  
that  
experience  
can evolve  
intelligence.

Let us see clearly what is meant by the proposition that experience can evolve intelligence. It is quite true that a man can inherit from his ancestors constitutional peculiarities of disposition and temper. It is another thing altogether to assume, as Mr. Spencer does, that modes of thought—fixed forms of knowledge—can be transmitted or inherited. Unless the forms of thought were already implicit in experience, there seems no possibility of their ever emerging from experience. If these forms are already in the mind, they can readily be applied to the organization of experience; and we can thus understand how common experience is possible. For the mass of sensations which any one may have comes to him in one way, and to another man in another way, and can never generate out of themselves the forms which are to make them an intelligible experience.

<sup>1</sup> *Psychology*, Vol. I. p. 471.

It is therefore no solution of the problem to say that forms of thought which are *a priori* to the individual are *a posteriori* to the race. The problem is how to account for experience, and the answer is that experience is possibly because of the activity of the subject. But Mr. Spencer assumes that the experience of the individual is one thing, and the experience of the race is another. For he acknowledges that experience does presuppose mental activity—in the case of the individual, but not in the case of the race. He gains time, no doubt, by the supposition; but he has not sought to explain how the mere lapse of time can alter the meaning of experience, and what is needed is an explanation of experience as we have it ourselves.

Experience cannot evolve forms of thought.

That there are certain forms of mental activity we may therefore take as granted by all kinds of schools. Mr. Spencer insists on them no less than others. He has no doubt discarded those forms, which by the consent of philosophers have usually been regarded as intuitions of the mind. It is universally conceded, however, that the mind has the power of knowing some things to be true, without any process of verification. There are truths which are universal and necessary, which are seen to be true as soon as they are understood. Experience does not make them true, for the truth of them is independent of experience, and by means of them unconnected sensations become orderly thought.

Forms of mental activity.

Necessary  
truth not  
the result  
of habit.

How do we come by these universal and necessary truths? Mr. Spencer's reply is, that they are the result of habit.

"Being the constant and infinitely-repeated elements of thought, they must become the automatic elements of thought—the elements of thought which it is impossible to get rid of—'the form of intuition.'"

Obviously, however, the conception of automatic elements does not help us. For we can never rise above automatism, and can only assert of our primary beliefs that we have experienced them, and we can say nothing more. As Professor Bowne says:—

Quotation  
from  
Professor  
Bowne.

"By Mr. Spencer's own principles, our subjective inability to get rid of these intuitions, is no proof of their objective validity. The inability results entirely from habit. If we had formed other habits, we should have thought otherwise. Besides, Mr. Spencer is the last man who should appeal to our necessary beliefs in support of any thing, for no one has done them greater violence. We have already seen how he insists upon the duality of subject and object as the most fundamental datum of thought, and one which it is impossible for us to transcend; yet in spite of the impossibility, Mr. Spencer declares them one. He further insists that no effort will enable us to think of thought and motion as alike: yet he assumes it as a first principle, that they are identical. We inevitably believe that personality is more than a bundle of feelings; but Mr. Spencer turns this belief out of doors without ceremony. We cannot help thinking that we see things as they are, that the qualities we attribute to them are really in them; but this belief too, Mr. Spencer cannot abide. There is scarcely a deliverance of our mature consciousness which Mr. Spencer has not insulted and denied. However, something must be saved in the midst of this universal denial, or the universe would vanish in the abyss of nihilism; and accordingly Mr. Spencer asks us to grant



him objective existence, and an infinite force, on the sole testimony of the same mind which he has loaded with opprobrium as a false witness. He insists upon these things because he cannot start his system without them ; he denies all the rest, because they are hostile to his system. Can anything be more convenient than this privilege of taking what we like and rejecting what we like ? Who could not build up a system if we could indulge in this little thing ? We cannot grant it, however. The elementary affirmations of the mind must stand or fall together, for no one has any better warrant than the rest.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Spencer has, however, got a number of first principles of his own, which he has promoted to the place formerly occupied by the universal and necessary truths he has sought to discredit. These first principles of his are the ultimate generalizations of science ; conclusions reached by observation and experiment, and by reasoning based on the results of these. These results have been reached by assuming the stability of the system with which they deal. And physicists are careful to tell us so. There is no diversity of opinion among men who are competent to speak of natural philosophy. We shall quote only one testimony from one of the latest text-books on physics ; a testimony which might be endlessly repeated.

Mr.  
Spencer's  
first  
principles.

“It cannot be too strongly insisted on that these general principles, the Constancy of Nature, the Law of Causality, Galileo's principle, the Three Laws of Motion, the Indestructibility of Matter and of Energy, are of no value for us except in so far as they are supported by experimental evidence. They are grouped together here, for the statement of them is necessary

Generalisa-  
tions of  
science  
not first  
principles.

<sup>1</sup> *The Philosophy of Herbert Spencer*, pp. 216, 217. New York, 1881.

for comprehension of the results which have been obtained through their aid. We are not here called upon to go through the steps by which they have been arrived at, but we must bear in mind that no *a priori* deduction of them by any metaphysical reasoning is for a moment admissible. The doctrine of the Conservation of Energy is very simple when stated as the result of experiment, and its simplicity has led to statements that the contrary is unthinkable, and that a belief in this doctrine is deeply grounded in the constitution of the mind of man ; but all conclusions derived from such reasoning must be regarded with suspicion, for we must take warning by the example of the ancients, who believed circular motions to be perfect, and heavy bodies to fall faster than light ones, until experimental evidence was adduced to the contrary."<sup>1</sup>

View of  
scientific  
men.

The process described by Mr. Daniell as illegitimate, is the process pursued by Mr. Spencer in his *First Principles*. The second part of the *First Principles* may be described as an attempt to transform the widest generalizations of science into *a priori* principles, and the attempt must be characterized as a failure. For the results of science have reference to the particular system, which as a matter of fact we have learnt to know. As a system, the finite world we know is of a particular kind. There are definite forces which interact with each other, in ways which may be known, measured, and expressed in mathematical formulæ. But the only way we have of knowing these forces is by way of observation and experiment. This is proven both by the success of the experimental method, and by the well-known failure of the method which

<sup>1</sup> *Daniell's Text-Book of Physics*, p. 8.

in a disguised form has been sanctioned by Mr. Spencer.

Foremost of the laws of the knowable, as enunciated by Mr. Spencer, is the law of evolution. Now we wish to say, that with regard to the theory of evolution as <sup>proclaimed</sup> enunciated by Mr. Darwin we do not profess to speak. That theory may be held in such a form as to have no dangerous consequences for philosophy or theology. But the theory of Mr. Spencer, with its far-reaching consequences, is altogether different from the scientific theory of Mr. Darwin, with its limited range and carefully guarded statements. Even Mr. Darwin's theory can never from the nature of the case rise beyond the dignity of a good working hypothesis, an hypothesis attended with many difficulties. But the view taken by Mr. Spencer may be disproved, and shown to be an untenable hypothesis.

The  
law of  
evolution.

The starting-point of Mr. Spencer's law of evolution is found in the science of embryology. "It is settled beyond dispute," he says, "that organic evolution consists in a change from the homogeneous to the <sup>dissimilar</sup> heterogeneous." This law of organic evolution is extended to all changes whatsoever, and is made the law of all evolution. Now, one would like to know what is meant by homogeneousness. The acorn under favourable conditions becomes an oak; and from

Homo-  
geneousness  
not to be  
found.

the minute jelly-like cell the completed organism grows. But in what sense can the acorn or the cell be said to be homogeneous? Only in that sense in which all things are alike in the absence of light. It is obvious that there are differences present in the germ-cell, or why does one become a horse and another a man? To the eye of reason the germ-cell is as complex as the completed structure. The one is the other made visible.

The same remark applies to the law of evolution at large. For homogeneousness is never defined by Mr. Spencer, nor is it ever present in any of the illustrations he uses. There are differences, even in the diffused state of matter postulated by the Nebular hypothesis; and differences are present everywhere. In fact the difficulty with regard to evolution is this, granted homogeneousness to account for differentiation. And yet differentiation, or variation, is just that part of evolution which is supposed to account for every thing, and which itself is unaccountable.

Differentia-  
tion un-  
accountable.

It certainly is quite unaccounted for in the system of Mr. Spencer. We have no rational account of whence it comes, or whither it goes: only this, that differences arise somehow. One of two courses was open to Mr. Spencer: either to admit that all differences are present at the outset, in which case homogeneousness vanishes; or else to assume a power outside of the homogeneous,

which can institute changes, preside over them, and guide them on to a purposed end. The actual course taken by him can have arisen only from lack of clearness of thought.

Let us glance for a moment at these ultimate generalizations of science which Mr. Spencer has elevated into first principles. There is quite a number of them, but we can only look at one or two. The law of the conservation of energy has become in his hands the persistence of force. As we know the conservation of energy from the researches of natural philosophers, it is intelligible, and has reference to the universe as a conservative system. Science teaches that energy is either kinetic or potential,—may be the energy of motion, or the energy of position. Energy is being incessantly stored as virtual power, and restored as actual motion. The sum of energy is a constant quantity, but the amount of it which is available is continually decreasing. One result of the doctrine of the conservation of energy is that we are dealing with a finite system which has had a beginning, and will have an end. The universe is likened by Balfour Stewart to a burning candle.

Energy a  
constant  
quantity.

“We are forced to realize a precise instant before which there were no phenomena, such as those with which we are acquainted, and since which the phenomena due to the relations of matter and energy have been occurring: while in the future we have to contemplate a moment at which the whole physical universe will have run itself down like the weights of a clock, and after

Degrada-  
tion of  
energy.



which an inert uniformly warm mass will represent the whole material order of things."<sup>1</sup>

This doctrine of the conservation of energy is named by Mr. Spencer "the persistence of force," and the nature of it changed in the naming. We make bold to say that no physicist will recognize the scientific doctrine of energy in the strange presentation of it given by Mr. Spencer, while a mediæval schoolman would hail it with delight as an old friend with a new face. "*Ex nihilo nihil fit*" is the olden maxim, which has been renamed the persistence of force, and raised to the position of universal datum, from which all else is deduced. It was a barren maxim in the olden time, nor is it likely to be more fruitful now. Mass and energy are real things, which cannot be increased or diminished, but force is only an abstraction which has no corresponding reality in the world of actual experience. Of course the concrete language of physicists would not lend itself readily to the uses of a philosophy. Had he used their language it would not have been easy for Mr. Spencer to speak of matter and motion as forms of force, and of force as the ultimate of ultimates.

Force an  
unreal  
abstraction.

Distinction  
between  
gravitation  
and other  
forces.

We here again come across the idea of the homogeneous. But the forces we know are far from being homogeneous. It is true indeed that a number of the physical forces are convertible into

<sup>1</sup> *Daniell's Text-Book of Physics*, p. 45.

each other; that light, heat, electricity, etc., may pass each into each and back again. But there is one force which is unique in its nature and action. Other forces are propagated with a finite velocity,—the force of gravitation seems to act instantaneously over the whole universe; other forces depend on many conditions for their action and existence,—gravitation acts on all bodies alike under all conditions. No obstacle stays its action, or can hinder it from proceeding in the straight line between the centre of attracting masses. It cannot be exhausted nor increased, but remains constant, every body attracting every other body in proportion to the quantity of matter in it. It is unlike all other forces that we know, and yet seems to be the universal condition and measure of them all. It may be remarked here that the work of physicists is not yet finished; and the doctrine of the conservation of energy, and of the correlation of force, needs a good deal of illustration yet.

When Mr. Spencer speaks of the persistence of force, we are therefore entitled to ask what kind of force? Is it a force like gravitation, which is constant, unchangeable, incessant, and inexhaustible? or is it a force like light, heat, or electricity, which is limited in its manifestations to certain states of body? Is it a force like life, limited to certain forms of organised matter? or a force like mental action, which appears only in more limited forms

Kinds of  
force.

What we  
know is a  
system of  
forces.

still? It affords us no rational explanation of the world in which we live, or of our own experience, to hypostatise a verbal abstraction, and call it by the name of force. What we do know is not force, but a system of forces, bound together in definite relations; and these relations can only be rightly understood, or understood at all, when we bring in the purpose of the system, and regard it as a system meant to be conservative.

Correlation  
of forces.

It is well to point out also that, while the force of gravitation is used as the final measure of energy, and we measure energy by foot-pounds, yet the force of gravity does not pass into other kinds of force, or if it does, it increases not, nor diminishes. The energy of the sun, which now comes to us as light, as heat, or in other forms, will by and by be exhausted. The molecular movements in the body of the sun will cease, and the sun will no longer be a source of that kind of energy. But even then gravitation will remain, for the force of gravitation depends on the mass and the distance, and will continue to act in a dead universe. The doctrine of the correlation of forces has been established because modes of motion pass into each other, and because we assume that the system of things is a closed system. But the doctrine of the correlation of forces, excellent though it be as a working hypothesis, and proven true of certain modes of motion, is

yet not demonstrated true of gravitation, for example.

It may be granted that it is very likely true of organic forces, though there is as yet only a strong presumption in its favour. But there is not the shadow of presumption in favour of the correlation of mental and physical forces. We write this advisedly, and in full view of Mr. Spencer's oft-repeated statement to the contrary. One of the strongest of these statements is the following :

"That no idea or feeling arises, save as a result of some physical force expended in producing it, is fast becoming a commonplace of science : and whoever duly weighs the evidence will see that nothing but an overwhelming bias in favour of a pre-conceived theory, can explain its non-acceptance."<sup>1</sup>

We can account for his affirmation of the correlation of the mental and physical forces only by supposing in Mr. Spencer an overwhelming bias in its favour. So far is it from being a commonplace of science that physical force is expended in producing feeling, that the contradictory of it may be regarded as a commonplace of science. Of the many scientific witnesses we might call, we shall content ourselves with the testimony of one, and that one is an ardent supporter of Mr. Spencer's philosophy :—

Mental and  
physical  
forces  
do not  
correlate.

"Does the motion *produce* the feeling, in the same sense that heat produces light? Does a given quantity of motion dis-

<sup>1</sup> *First Principles*, p. 280.

Mr. Fiske's  
testimony.

appear, to be replaced by an equivalent quantity of feeling? By no means. The nerve-motion, in disappearing, is simply distributed into other nerve-motions in various parts of the body; and these other nerve-motions, in their turn, become variously metamorphosed into motions of contraction in muscles, motions of secretion in glands, motion of assimilation in tissues generally, or into yet other nerve-motions. . . . If the law of the 'correlation of forces' is to be applied at all to the physical processes which go on within the living organism, we are of necessity bound to render our whole account in terms of motion which can be quantitatively measured. Once admit into the circuit of metamorphosis some element—such as feeling—that does not allow of quantitative measurement, and the correlation can no longer be established; we are landed at once in absurdity and contradiction. So far as the correlation of force has anything to do with it, the entire circle of transmutation, from the lowest physico-chemical motion all the way up to the highest nerve-motion, and all the way down again to the lowest physico-chemical motion, must be described in physical terms, and no account whatever can be taken of any such thing as feeling or consciousness.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Fiske's  
statement,  
if true,  
fatal  
to Mr.  
Spencer's  
system.

A bias to the contrary cannot be supposed true of Mr. Fiske, or of Dr. David Ferrier, or Du-Bois-Raymond, or of others who have spoken on the subject, all of whom agree with Mr. Fiske, and disagree with Mr. Spencer. If the statement of Mr. Fiske is true, it is fatal to the system of Mr. Spencer; and if the statement of Mr. Spencer be true, he will have to show its consistency with the conservation of energy. Mr. Spencer shows that strong mental action is accompanied by motion in the blood, as can be seen from a flushed face, and in other ways. But strong mental action ought, on the theory, to be accompanied,

<sup>1</sup> *Darwinism and other Essays*, by John Fiske, p. 72.



not by an evolution, but by a disappearance of force. It may be noticed also that Mr. Spencer's mechanical explanation of the origin and differentiation of the nervous system, by the supposition of motion in the line of least resistance or of greatest traction, or of the resultant between the two, has now been shown to be inconsistent with embryological facts.<sup>1</sup>

The teaching of science gives no support to Mr. Spencer's datum of the persistence of force. Science discloses to us the working of a system of forces, which by reason of the activity of their interaction must work themselves out, and cease to exert energy. If we wish to get persistence as a foundation for our thought, we must in thought go outside of the system of interacting forces, and postulate some other kind of power. It is eminently unreasonable to abstract from the various kinds of force which we know, only one phase or aspect, and credit that abstraction with the infinite variety of the system. Still more unreasonable is it to identify the eternal energy with the lowest and simplest kind of energy which we can know. And the most unreasonable course of all is to call it "homogeneous." For neither homogeneous force, nor a homogeneous unity of force can be found either in science or in the works of Mr. Spencer.

The  
persistence  
of force un-  
scientific.

If Mr. Spencer's datum of the persistence of

<sup>1</sup> See *Nature*, Vol. XXII., p. 420.

Mr.  
Spencer's  
scholastic  
dogmas.

Their  
resemblance  
to the  
entities and  
quiddities of  
the school-  
men.

force is doubtful, much more doubtful are the other mental forms, so-called by him, which he deduces from it. The number of these is great. The indestructibility of matter, the continuity of motion, the correlation and equivalence of force, and others. Each chapter closes with an attempt to show that the principle is a direct corollary from the persistence of force, and an *a priori* truth of the highest certainty. What a pity that the discovery had not been made sooner, what endless travail our toiling men of science would have been spared had they known that mere cogitation could have made them masters of the results won by protracted labour and experiment! But on Mr. Spencer by the necessity of his system is laid the harder task of proving that laws which have been discovered by induction, are really *a priori* truths. The laws which he calls *a priori* truths bear a suspicious resemblance to the entities and quiddities of the schoolmen. One of these we have already mentioned, "*ex nihilo nihil fit*" is the scholastic equivalent of the persistence of force and the indestructibility of matter, while the continuity of motion is nothing else than the old doctrine that "nature abhors a vacuum," or "nature never makes a leap." The only way of knowing whether these are or are not true, is to find out. For many ages it was believed as a matter of fact that matter was destructible, and many people believe it still; no doubt this

belief is incorrect. But its incorrectness is not to be demonstrated on *a priori* grounds, but in other ways. Mr. Spencer feels obliged

“to reject a large part of human thinking as not thinking at all, but pseudo-thinking;”

and the reason for rejecting it is that it is inconceivable.

Mr. Spencer rejects a large portion of human thinking as pseudo-thinking because inconceivable.

“Our inability to conceive matter becoming non-existent is immediately consequent upon the nature of thought itself. Thought consists in the establishment of relations. There can be no relation, and therefore no thought framed, when one of the terms is absent from consciousness.”

Now, if this sort of argument is good for Mr. Spencer's purpose, it is good for more. Let us try it with change. Our inability to conceive of change is consequent on the nature of thought itself. Thought consists in the establishment of relations. “Only the permanent can change,” says Kant. But permanence and change cannot be united in the same act of thought. Let us, however, take Mr. Spencer himself. Let us remind him of his own argumentation about motion,<sup>1</sup> and he must acknowledge how vain his argument is about the indestructibility of matter, and how idle his demonstration of the continuity of motion.

Mr. Spencer's argument is good for more than his purpose.

In truth this endeavour to translate ultimate results of science into *a priori* truths is exceedingly dangerous. Science teaches that the universe

<sup>1</sup> *First Principles*, p. 57, etc.

Further  
incon-  
sistencies.

tends, in virtue of the expenditure of energy, to a state of rest, when all differences of temperature, which are the conditions of motion, shall be merged in identity. In such a state of matters motion will be impossible, and yet Mr. Spencer states that the continuity of motion is an *a priori* truth. Is not this to throw doubt on the nature of our intelligence, and to bring the dicta of intelligence into direct conflict with the system of things?

Continuity  
of motion.

The only proof of the continuity of motion which Mr. Spencer gives is derived from the doctrine of the conservation of energy. Molar motion is continued, and passes into molecular motion. And it is difficult to think of motion as discontinuous since this discovery has been made. Men have, however, thought that motion was discontinuous, and could be lost. They could never have thought so if the continuity of motion were an *a priori* truth, like the truth that two and two make four. If Mr. Spencer should say "that the explanation is that in this, as in countless other cases, men have supposed to think what they do not think," we reply by pointing to the opinion of Newton, who was certainly a competent thinker in matters of natural philosophy. We quote from his *Optics* :—

'From which instance it appears that motion may be gained or lost. By reason of the tenacity of fluids, and attrition of their parts, and the weakness of elastic force in solid bodies,

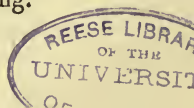
motion is more readily lost than gained, and is continually decreasing."<sup>1</sup>

We quote this statement simply for the sake of showing that the principle of the continuity of motion cannot be an *a priori* truth, whatever kind of truth it may be. It has reference to the system of things which we actually find in existence, and is a deduction from the thought that postulates the stability of the system.

The truth is that Mr. Spencer's highest postulate is not the persistence of force, but the assumption that the present system of things is the only possible system. This assumption can be justified only when we bring in another conception, which Mr. Spencer never uses until he comes to speak of sociology and ethics. The conception of purpose is raised at the very outset of any system, and without it it is impossible to have an intelligent conception of the collocations of matter, or even of the nature of molecular combination, and of the laws of molecular action. The laws of matter are so and so, because they have been made so. In other words, the mechanical explanation of things invariably leads us beyond itself, and lands us in intelligence as the only rational explanation we can by any possibility have. The persistence of force is a barren postulate, as fruitless and as useless as the companion abstraction of "pure being."

Mr.  
Spencer's  
real  
assumption.

<sup>1</sup> *Optics*, p. 341. Ed. 1706.





## IV.

THE GROUNDS OF MR. SPENCER'S DOCTRINE OF  
THE "UNKNOWABLE."

Test of  
truth.

This leads us to the test of truth which Mr. Spencer uses. A proposition is true when its opposite cannot be conceived. We remark, however, that the inconceivableness of the opposite is only one of the marks of universal and necessary truth. It has the disadvantage also of being stated in a negative form. In a positive form, the statement is that *a priori* truths are self-evident as soon as they are seen and understood. The mind asserts the knowledge of them to be true and valid, and self-evident. Mr. Spencer's principle is the same principle in a negative form. We try to think the contrary to be true, and we find it impossible. If the principle be a primitive and universal one, the impossibility to thought of its contradictory is universal.

Its positive  
as well as  
negative  
form.

The advantage of having this test of truth stated in its positive as well as in its negative form lies here. It shows to us our primitive beliefs do not arise from mental weakness, but from mental power. It is not a negation of knowledge arising from our inability to think, but an assertion of mental activity so positive that it carries in itself the consciousness that it is impossible to think the

opposite. Hamilton's theory of mental imbecility, professedly applied by him to explicate the causal judgment, vanishes at once when it is seen that the causal judgment is an act, not of mental weakness, but of mental power.

In the application of this test of knowledge in its negative form, Mr. Spencer varies. Sometimes he means by inconceivable what cannot be pictured in imagination, sometimes what cannot be expressed in a concept, and sometimes what is unthinkable. But the conceivable cannot be limited to the imaginable; if it were, all knowledge expressed in abstract terms would be unreal and untrue. We have positive knowledge of what we mean by the word book, to our imagination we can only picture one particular book. Sometimes Mr. Spencer uses the word inconceivable in this sense; but it is obvious that he only does so when no other test of inconceivability would readily apply.

More frequently, however, he uses the word inconceivable to indicate that which cannot be classed. This is the difficulty which he has himself added to the verbal dexterities he has borrowed from Hamilton and Mansel, and he elaborates it with great delight in the chapter on the *relativity of knowledge*. If we say that the knowledge of the individual precedes the knowledge of the general notion, and the knowledge of the general notion is dependent on the knowledge of the individual, we

Ambiguities  
of the term  
inconceiv-  
able.

only say what every one knows to be true. But Mr. Spencer will not allow us to suppose that we can know a concrete individual unless we can class it under a logical concept. In which case, we may remark, we can never know an individual. We must assert, however, that the concrete individual is the starting-point of thought, and knowledge of the individual precedes the formation of the concept. The qualities of the individual are known before they can be known as characteristics of a kind or class. The procedure of Mr. Spencer is based on the assumption that our knowledge of an individual is derived from the general notion, and can extend no further, and affirms nothing else than we can obtain from the analysis of the concept. This is not the only instance of atavism which we have found in Mr. Spencer's reasoning. It is the method of the schoolmen; and if it be true, there is no possibility of synthetic judgment either *a priori* or *a posteriori*.

In dealing with *The Universal Postulate* of Mr. Spencer, we have been insensibly led on to his doctrine of the "unknowable." To this dogma of his, we now direct attention. At the outset we have to complain that he has applied one measure to the truth of science, and another to the truth of religion. He has endeavoured to prove that the ultimate scientific realities, represented by ultimate scientific ideas, are unknowable because unthink-

able. Mind, matter, space, time, force, are forms of the "unknowable." But this does not prevent Mr. Spencer from dealing with all these realities, or from formulating a certain number of propositions regarding their nature and action. The dread of committing himself to alternate impossibilities has not hindered him from tracing in his own way the genesis of our conceptions of these "unthinkable" realities. But it was a sufficient justification for denying the truth of religious ideas and affirmations, to show that the affirmation of the object of religion committed us "to alternate impossibilities of thought." On his own showing, the truths of religion must have, or may have, as great a relative validity as the truths of science and philosophy.

In conclusion, we shall look at the reasonings by which Mr. Spencer believes himself to have demonstrated that the ultimate reality is utterly unknowable. The reasonings he has excogitated for himself as well as those which he has borrowed from Sir William Hamilton and Dean Mansel, are degraded forms of the <sup>epigrammatic rules</sup> antinomies of Kant. They suffered their first degradation when Hamilton changed the positive affirmations of mind into mental weakness, and substituted for the positive judgment of causality the negative conception of being unable to conceive a beginning. They suffered a second degradation

The  
antinomies  
of Kant.

at the hands of Dean Mansel, and a third degradation at the hands of Mr. Spencer. But what cogency the argument may have is all derived from Kant, and has gained nothing, but rather lost in the hands of the others. The strength of the argument lies here, that from the nature of the reason we necessarily believe in two contradictory propositions. Kant's antinomies are four, and they emerge when we consider the idea of the world. The thesis is that the world is limited in time and space, and the antithesis equally affirms that it is not thus limited. A second antinomy is that the world consists of simple parts, and the antithesis is that no simple substances exist. The third antinomy is, that free will exists, and the antithesis is that it does not exist, but everything happens necessarily under the laws of nature. And the fourth is that an absolute Being exists, and the antithesis is that absolute Being exists nowhere.]

Are they  
contra-  
dictory?

In these antinomies we have the type after which all the argumentation of Hamilton, Mansel, and Spencer has been fashioned. Once we get the model, the manufacture may go on without limit. But the question arises are the antinomies contradictory of each other? and the apostles of the "unknowable" answer in the affirmative. But if we must believe in contradictory propositions, then reason is no longer trustworthy, and cannot be trusted in any affirmation it may happen to make.



The contradiction arises only when we <sup>silently</sup> tacitly assume that there is only one kind of being in the universe. If we suppose that there are more kinds of beings than one, then the thesis may be true of one, and the antithesis of another. There is no contradiction when we say that the material universe is limited in time and space, and apply the unlimited not to the universe but to time and space, which cannot be conceived as limited except by further time and space. There is no contradiction if we say that the world is limited, and say that God is unlimited. To pass to the second antinomy, can we rationally affirm both the thesis and antithesis here. I can affirm both of myself. I am conscious of myself persisting in self-identity throughout the years; and I am also conscious of the actions, feelings, thoughts, which are mine. Both sides of the antinomy are realised as complementary of each other, in the unity of self-consciousness. The antinomy is reconciled also in any unity in which opposites meet, or where many qualities manifest the nature of any one thing. The third antinomy finds its solution in the affirmation that some beings are free and others are not free, because some beings are personal and others are impersonal. Freedom and necessity may also be predicated of the same person. I express the antinomy thus, "I am free to bind myself,"—a proposition which at once unites the antinomy, and which everyone knows to

Explanation  
of anti-  
nomies.

be true. With regard to the fourth antinomy of Kant, which refers to the existence of the absolute and both affirms and denies its existence, we may remark that the contradiction vanishes when we assume that there is an absolute, and that there is a relative, which is rooted and grounded in the absolute.

Thus the exercise of a little common sense will largely set us free from the tyranny of the antinomies of pure reason, and will lead us on to see that reason does not belie itself in its deepest affirmations. What has enabled us to escape from the antinomies of Kant will also lead us out of the dilemmas of Herbert Spencer. Let us take one of the antinomies or contradictions paraded by him :

Examina-  
tion of  
a specimen  
contra-  
diction.

“If we now go a step further, and ask what is the nature of the First Cause, we are driven by an inexorable logic to certain further conclusions. Is the First Cause finite or infinite? If we say finite we involve ourselves in a dilemma. To think of the first cause as finite, is to think of it as limited. To think of it as limited, necessarily implies a conception of something beyond its limits : It is absolutely impossible to conceive a thing as bounded, without conceiving a region surrounding its boundaries. What now must we say of this region? If the First Cause is limited, and there consequently lies something outside of it, this something must have no First Cause—must be uncaused. But if we admit that there can be something uncaused, there is no reason to assume a cause for anything.”<sup>1</sup>

We place alongside of this the following sentence from Mr. Spencer :

<sup>1</sup> *First Principles*, p. 37.

“Amid the mysteries which become the more mysterious the more they are thought about, there will remain the one absolute certainty, that he is ever in presence of an Infinite and Eternal Energy, from which all things proceed.”<sup>1</sup>

The one  
absolute  
certainty.

We are not aware that any one interested in religion or in philosophy demanded anything more from a First Cause than this. What reason asks from a First Cause is that it be equal to the production of all the effects. It is not necessary for reason to say whether it is limited or unlimited, any more than it is necessary to say that it is black or white. [“If we admit that there can be something uncaused, there is no reason to assume a cause for anything.” We do not assume a cause for existence; what reason demands is that every beginning or that every change must have a cause. Cause is necessary to account for beginning and for change, and as the correlative of this axiom it assumes as another principle that there is a being itself unchanged, which is the cause of all changes.]

It were tedious to pass through the various contradictions heaped together by Mr. Spencer. More strange than anything we have seen is the affirmation which he makes of the absolute certainty we have of an Infinite and Eternal Energy from which all things proceed. If we were to treat this after the Spencerian fashion, we should have to ask how a conditioned and relative intelli-

<sup>1</sup> *Nineteenth Century*, January, 1884.

gence can attain to absolute certainty? How a being can be called unknowable when we know it to be Infinite and Eternal Energy? When we gather together into one thought all that Mr. Spencer affirms regarding the "unknowable," we find that it is an absolute being, that it is an omnipresent power, that it is incomprehensible, and that it is the proper object of religious reverence, and that we are ever in its presence, and from it all things proceed. Truly we must come to the conclusion that the word "unknowable" is used only in a Spencerian sense. We have only to say further of this Power, that it is conscious spirit, and is intelligent and personal, and we shall have all that is needed for religious life and thought. If we can be absolutely certain that we are in presence of an Eternal Infinite Energy, we can be certain of more. By this affirmation Mr. Spencer has transcended his own manufactured contradictions as much as if he had gone on to transcribe the Creed of Christendom in order to conclude with it his *Nineteenth Century* article.

Summary  
and con-  
clusion.

We have seen then that Mr. Spencer's objections from the nature of consciousness breaks down when we come to understand what consciousness really means. We have seen that he could not even describe consciousness without implying the continued existence of the self-conscious subject. We have seen also that the self-conscious subject

has definite ways of acting, willing, thinking; forms into which all its experience falls. We have seen also that Mr. Spencer's attempt to manufacture *a priori* principles, and to change the ultimate generalisations of science into first principles, resulted in failure, because they all involved the stability of the system of things. We have seen also that the "alternate impossibilities" of thought arise only from confounding one kind of being with another; and in conclusion that the affirmations of Mr. Spencer had only to be extended a little further in order to include all we need.

The contradictions detailed at such length in the opening part of *First Principles* do not prove what Mr. Spencer supposes them to do: on the contrary, they prove only that there are different orders of being, and that our knowledge of being is real, and that the distinction we draw between the absolute and the relative, between independent and dependent being, between personal and impersonal being, is true and valid; and the contradictions arise only when Mr. Spencer blends in one confusion, and utterly disregards the distinctions which reason draws. If God exists, then reason is in harmony with itself and with reality as known. We have a real knowledge of God, just as we have a real knowledge of ourselves. In neither case do we claim that our knowledge is complete and exhaustive. The mystery of existence may overpass

We have  
a real  
knowledge  
of God.



God has  
wrought  
and spoken.

Our  
knowledge  
of God  
may be  
vindicated  
on grounds  
of reason.

our knowledge. To-day, as in former days, man must say, "Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?" And yet, when all is said that can be said about the measureless mystery which wraps us round, and the unexplored heights and depths which are around us on every side, we may rest secure in the persuasion that our knowledge is true and real. Reverence bows low in the presence of the eternal silence; and uplifts itself to hear the voice that breaks the silence. The living God has wrought, and the living God has spoken, and we have heard His voice. We do not need to go back to the time when men built altars to the unknown God, for He whom men did ignorantly worship has been revealed. We do know the God who has revealed Himself in the universe, who is the Author of its beauty, the Upholder of its order, and the Guide of it to its appointed goal. We do know the Redeemer God, the Restorer of the course of the sinful world to eternal purity and peace; we do know the living God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. And though much remain unknown, yet the knowledge is sure, and may be vindicated on grounds of reason, that "of Him, and through Him, and unto Him, are all things. To Him be the glory, for ever. Amen."

# MODERN PESSIMISM.

BY THE

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"THE WITNESS OF MAN'S MORAL NATURE TO CHRISTIANITY."



THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:

56 PATERNOSTER ROW, AND 65 ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD.

## Argument of the Tract.

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HUMAN life being composite,—joy and sorrow being alike facts of experience,—various theories have been advanced for its explanation. Pessimism is the doctrine that all things are for the worst, that there is no Benevolent Ruler of the Universe, and no hope of happiness for man. A revival of Oriental Buddhism, Pessimism at present prevails largely in several countries of Europe. The metaphysical bases of Pessimism are described, and its doctrines, as wrought out by Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann, are explained. Specimens are given of the gloomy view taken by Pessimists of human existence.

The unreasonableness of Pessimism as a Philosophy is then exhibited. The error and unfairness of the Pessimist view of life are next exposed. An estimate is offered of the value of life, and it is shown that Christianity alone is able to solve the problem.

The Tract concludes with a picture of the evils which the prevalence of Pessimism would involve, and with a contrast between the fruits of this system and those of the Religion of Christ.



# MODERN PESSIMISM.



## I.

### PESSIMISM A PHILOSOPHY OF HUMAN LIFE.



MEN, in the exercise of observation, reflection, and reasoning, cannot but endeavour to construct a philosophy of life. The children of nature may indeed accept all experience without inquiry; they may be content without seeking a harmony in life's varied voices, without asking for a clue to life's perplexing mysteries. But as soon as men begin to regard existence as a whole, to consider the world as a problem, to demand reasons for their own nature and experiences, for their own history and hopes,—they must theorize. ( In fashioning for themselves a philosophy of life, men will of necessity be influenced by individual temperament; some are by nature cheerful, and some are by nature morose. Circumstances, too, both personal and domestic, both social and political, will largely affect their speculations and determine their conclusions.)

Men are constrained to construct a philosophy of life.

Human life  
composite

It needs little experience, little observation, to discern that life is a many-coloured web, in which the bright warp of happiness is crossed by the dull sombre weft of pain and sadness. Human experience abounds in sorrow and privation, in perplexity and difficulty, in misfortunes and disappointments, in sins and fears. Man's body is often weak, and unfit for the demands made upon it; his intellect is beset by doubts which cannot be solved; his heart has aspirations which cannot be satisfied; his lot is liable to vicissitudes, to calamities, to untimely end.

Joy and  
sorrow alike  
natural and  
inevitable.

How can it  
be ex-  
plained?

What explanation can be given of our existence? where shall its unity be grasped? whence shall its purport and its prospects be beheld? Is a philosophy of life possible? and if so, who will help us to achieve it?

To the  
Christian,  
enlightened  
by Reve-  
lation, life  
appears a  
probation  
and a dis-  
cipline.

As Christians, accepting the Word of God as of Divine authority, we are not dependent for guidance in such a path of inquiry upon the speculations of unaided human reason. We claim for revealed religion that its representations of human life are just and adequate, satisfying to the intellect and the conscience. This is because the Scriptures support and amplify the soundest and loftiest teaching of reason, and add to this teaching declarations, sanctions, motives, and prospects peculiarly their own. Christians have learned to exalt the spiritual nature of man, at the same time that they



realize the fact of human sin. To them man's earthly course is a probation and a discipline,—the moral relations of man with his Divine Lord and Father are of supreme importance, and this state of being is preparatory to one ampler, richer, and immortal.

As a matter of fact, philosophies of life have been wrought out in all cultivated communities, both in ancient and in modern times. They have differed from one another, both in the measure of fairness with which they have contemplated the facts of human existence, and in the measure of sagacity and insight with which they have apprehended the true and Divine meaning underlying what is apparent.

Various theories proposed.

To particularize, there are two opposite theories known as *optimism* and *pessimism*: two theories which regard the same facts in entirely opposite lights. According to the advocates of the first of these doctrines, this is the best of all possible worlds, life is fraught with happiness, man is capable of development in all excellence, and the prospect before the human race is bright and alluring. It is, however, to the philosophy which is diametrically opposite to this that we invite the attention of the reader.

Two opposite theories especially deserve consideration: Optimism and Pessimism.

(PESSIMISM is the very expressive name given to the doctrine that this is the worst of all possible worlds,—that human life necessarily contains more

Pessimism  
defined.

pain than pleasure, that there is no prospect of improvement in the human lot, that life is not worth living, and that conscious existence must be regarded as the worst of all possible evils.

Taken here  
in a strict  
sense.

It is true that the term in question is often more loosely employed. In popular language those persons are called Pessimists who take a gloomy and despondent view of their own lot, and of the prospects of society at large. We meet with manifestations of the pessimistic spirit in a cynical style of conversation not uncommon among educated men of a certain temperament, and in the sceptical, hopeless tone of very much of modern literature. But we have to deal here with a reasoned and elaborate system of belief, having all the pretensions of a philosophy.

## II.

### PESSIMISM A REVIVAL OF ANCIENT BUDDHISM.

Occasional  
signs of the  
Pessimistic  
spirit in the  
ancient  
Hebrew and  
Greek  
literature.

SYMPTOMS of a Pessimistic spirit are to be remarked occasionally in ancient literature. In the Old Testament books of Job and Ecclesiastes are sweeping statements regarding the misery of life, prompted by phases of experience through which certain characters are recorded to have passed. Some of the great Greek tragedies portray the helplessness of man in the presence of an irresistible and apparently malignant fate. But it is generally

admitted that the tone of the earlier Hebrew literature, and the tone of classical antiquity is rather optimistic than otherwise. Life seemed, especially to the Greeks, a thing beautiful and precious in itself, and man was regarded by them as born for happiness.

The most remarkable development of Pessimism in ancient times is to be sought in the theosophies and religions of the distant East. (For thousands of years India has been the home of the philosophy of hopelessness. It may have been owing partly to the poverty, want, and misery, which have been for ages the lot of untold myriads of Orientals, and partly to the prevalence of cruelty and oppression in political relations; in any case, the Hindus seem always to have found a solution of their difficulties, and a shelter from their wretchedness, in a philosophy which has fully admitted the evils they have experienced, and has in some measure armed them for endurance.) Brahmanism has ever taught the vanity and misery of human life, and held out the prospect of absorption into the Infinite Being as the highest attainable blessedness.

The hopeless  
tone of the  
Brahmanic  
philosophy  
and religion.

But whilst the Brahmanic philosophy represents the created world as a fact to be mourned over, the evil of which can only be remedied, or rather neutralized, in the way proposed,—*Buddhism* is far more thorough-going in its Pessimism. This influential system of belief and of conduct, which

Buddhism  
the Oriental  
Pessimism.

came into existence five centuries before Christ, and which has exercised influence so immense in India, Ceylon, Thibet, and China, has been designated "the great heresy of the East." Much as has been written upon Buddhism, discussion is still carried on with regard to some of its leading doctrines. The author of *Esoteric Buddhism* would have us believe that we in the West are still all but ignorant of this pretentious theosophy. Still, we may be assured that Buddhism is Pessimism, pure and simple, that it acknowledges no Creator, no absolute Being, whilst its only desirable prospect in the future is that Nirvana, which is understood to be utter extinction and annihilation, or at all events an eternal and passionless repose.

"Buddha, Eckhart, and myself," said Schopenhauer, "in the main teach the same doctrine." Pessimism is indeed the Buddhism of the nineteenth century. Buddha was a theologian, Schopenhauer a philosopher. Buddhism was a Gospel for sages; Pessimism professes to be a Gospel for humanity. The modern Pessimism has been well described as "Buddhism without Buddha." Sakya Mouni was not a philosopher who constructed a system for the adoption of others only, while he himself dwelt apart from human experiences of privation; he had a deeply-rooted conviction of the evil and misery of life,—a conviction manifested not only in his teaching, but in his whole life and ministry.

Holding  
forth to  
humanity  
no hope save  
annihilation.

Modern  
Pessimists  
acknowledge  
their affinity  
with  
Buddhism.

That Buddhism should prove itself the great missionary faith of heathendom, that it should have been accepted by so many millions as the true philosophy of life and the true religion, that it should have retained its hold upon vast populations for successive generations and ages, that it should afford some satisfaction to multitudes of thoughtful and virtuous men as the best solution of life's enigmas, and the best guide in life's perplexities: all this is proof that there is in it a doctrine, a principle, which responds to some deep-seated sentiments in the human breast. It is very remarkable that in our own day there should be an attempt to introduce the Buddhist theosophy, without any disguise, among the educated classes of Britain and America, as the most profound and satisfying of all known theories of man and of the universe!

The power  
and popu-  
larity of  
Buddhism.

It is certainly singular that the very same Pessimism, which has prevailed so widely and so long in the East, should be revived in this nineteenth century among the most educated and advanced peoples of Europe. How is it to be explained that an age of enlightenment, of widespread education, of unexampled material, mechanical and scientific progress, of political energy, of social liberty, of missionary enterprise, should give birth to so strange a product? In a state of society stationary, dull, unenterprising, such a

The strange  
revival of  
Pessimism  
in Europe  
in the  
nineteenth  
century.



Its apparent  
discordance  
with the  
temper of  
the age.

phenomenon would appear explicable, if not natural. But in the nations of Western Europe there seems so much scope for activity, so much appreciation of mental power, so much room for progress, and so much stimulus to hope, that Pessimism seems altogether out of place. Especially is this so, when we consider the vitality and the growth of Christianity, which, notwithstanding repeated and powerful attacks, does far more than hold its own in the moral conflict of the world.

However, the fact must be acknowledged, and the issue must be faced. In Germany, the depressing doctrines of Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann have been received by multitudes among the educated classes as a Gospel of despair; a Pessimistic school of philosophy has been formed, and a Pessimistic literature has arisen. The same way of regarding human life and the universe has spread to other nations, and Pessimism is not without its adherents and its influence in France and in England. In fact, much of the sceptical and cynical writing of our day, to be met with in our reviews and magazines, is simply saturated with Pessimism. We meet constantly with a tone of cynicism and despondency, for the explanation, the source, of which, we must look to the philosophy in question. A vein of Pessimism runs through the conversation and the literary compositions even of those who might be supposed exempt from an in-

Yet modern  
literature is  
largely  
tainted  
with  
Pessimism.

fluence of the kind. The young, the cultured, the wealthy, the fortunate and prosperous, are to be found among the disciples of this school.<sup>1</sup>

The question, which has been so keenly debated, "Is life worth living?" could never have arisen in an age which was alien from Pessimistic speculations. It is certainly an indication of a habit of going down to the very roots of controversy, that such a question should have been mooted and discussed. If pleasure be regarded as the only, or the chief element which gives value to life, it is certain that different sides will be taken in this debate. Mr. Herbert Spencer maintains that the answer to the question depends upon the preponderance of pleasure over pain, or of pain over pleasure; and evidently inclines to the opinion that the excess of pleasures decides the value of life. The same test, however, when applied by the school of Schopenhauer, leads to the conviction that pain is the master force, and that conscious existence is in itself an evil. ||

Difference  
of estimate  
as to the  
value of life.

<sup>1</sup> It has been remarked by an Edinburgh reviewer (April, 1879) that many of the extreme departures from Christian orthodoxy which have marked our own times have been revivals of ancient systems. Certainly modern Materialism is simply the old doctrine of Epicurus and Lucretius, adapted to the state of modern physical science. The new Catholicism which has made way among some classes of our own countrymen is the mediæval theology reanimated. Mr. Matthew Arnold's moral Idealism is little more than Confucianism. In like manner the Pessimism, in exposition of which so many volumes have been written, especially in Germany, is substantially the Buddhism of five centuries before Christ.

## III.

THE ADVOCACY AND PREVALENCE OF PESSIMISM  
IN ITALY, RUSSIA, ENGLAND, AND ESPECIALLY  
IN GERMANY.

It would be impossible, and it is unnecessary, here to enumerate all the symptoms of Pessimism which have appeared in our century, or even to mention the names of all the notable champions of the system. It must suffice to refer to the poetical Pessimism of the Italian Leopardi, to the social and literary Pessimism of Russia, and to the philosophical Pessimism of Germany;—the last being by far the most important and influential. Even so limited a review will serve to convince the reader that the philosophy which we are here treating is amongst the great forces of our age.

The life of  
the Italian  
poet,  
Leopardi.

Leopardi, the Italian poet, who was born ten years after Schopenhauer, and who died before he was forty (1798-1837), was a thorough-going Pessimist. He does not seem to have been in any way acquainted with the speculations of his German contemporary, nor were his views of life based upon any metaphysical doctrines. In his youth he was devoted to study, and acquired considerable classical learning; he was regarded as a man of genius, from whom great things were

hoped. Though of a noble family, his means were very narrow, and circumstances no doubt concurred with wretched health to sadden and darken his views of life. His reputation rests upon his original poetry, his translations, and upon some critical works. He himself denied that his philosophical opinions were the result of his misfortunes. "I would beg of my readers," he wrote, "to burn my writings rather than attribute them to my sufferings." Still, how otherwise can we account for the weariness and disgust of life which took possession of him in the spring-time of youth? When only nineteen he spoke of "the obstinate, black, and barbarous melancholy" which devoured and destroyed him; when twenty he wrote,

His misery  
and hatred  
of life.

"I have passed years so full of bitterness, that it seems impossible for worse to succeed them."

At a later period he thus expressed his feelings:

"I am weary of life, and weary of the philosophy of indifference, which is the only cure for misfortune and *ennui*, but which at length becomes an *ennui* itself. I look and hope for nothing but death."

In 1830, when dedicating his *Canti* to his Tuscan friends, he thus referred to his ill-health and disappointments:

"My sufferings are incapable of increase; already my misfortune is too great for tears. I have lost everything, and am but a trunk that feels and suffers."

Leopardi cannot be suspected of affectation. It is reasonable to regard his distressing emotions and

Explanation  
of his state  
of mind.

his pessimistic doctrines as largely the consequence of bodily weakness and pain, and of disappointed social and literary ambition, unchastened by any faith in Divine Providence, unrelieved by any prospect of a happier life in the future. Physically incapable of many of life's pleasures, he passionately yearned for them. He was conscious of abilities which his circumstances would not allow to develop and mature. He loved apparently in vain.)

His  
judgment  
of the  
human lot,  
and his  
despair.

Soured and dissatisfied, Leopardi evidently embodied in his letters, his dialogues, his poems, his distorted views of life. Nothing in literature is more sad than his language regarding human existence. *Infelicità* — misery — is, according to him, the only explanation which can be given of human affairs; this is universal and irremediable, —such is our only certainty. "The most happy lot," said he, "is not to live." "Human consciousness is itself a curse, and the brute and the plant are happier than man." "Our life, what is it worth, but to despise it?" "When will *Infelicità* perish? When all ends!"

His philosophy has thus been summarized by Edwards, the translator of his works:

"The universe is an enigma totally insoluble. The sufferings of mankind exceed all good that men experience. Progress, or as we call it, civilization, instead of lightening men's sufferings, increases them; since it enlarges man's capacities for suffering, without proportionately augmenting his means of enjoyment."

In short, Leopardi explicitly envied the dead, and



lamented the infinite vanity of all things. (*L'infinita vanità del tutto.*)

Yet Leopardi was a patriot,—a patriotic poet. In the Italy of his time there was little to encourage hope. His poetry sang of Italy's past greatness and glory; he cherished no expectation of national revival. Events have shown that his estimate was mistaken; his pessimism, as far as his country was concerned, has been proved unjustifiable.

There is one country in Europe in which Pessimism has penetrated to the lower strata of society. That country is Russia, the empire of absolutism in political life, of ignorance and superstition in religion. It is remarkable and suggestive that, notwithstanding the emancipation of the serfs, and other steps taken in keeping with the march of modern civilization, discontent so largely pervades the Muscovite empire. The young and the intellectual, women as well as men, furnish active and enthusiastic supporters to the cause of revolution; Europe is periodically startled by proofs of the boldness, the secrecy, the self-immolation of the Nihilists. The existence of Pessimist sects among the common people may be a symptom of that deep unrest which cannot but prevail in a community where personal liberty is unknown, where corruption is the canker of the official classes, where there is no publicity in the administration of so-called justice, and where there are no open and legitimate

Nihilism  
and  
Pessimism  
in Russia.

The secret  
societies  
among the  
Russian  
peasants.

means for the expression of dissatisfaction, and for the furtherance of reform. It has for many years been known that there are in Russia secret societies comprising large numbers of adherents, whose great uniting principle is a common conviction of the worthlessness and hatefulness of life. And it is also well known that in some such societies the practice of barbarous mutilation prevails, with a view to the prevention of offspring, and ultimately to the extinction of the species. There must be something more than a philosophical theory to account for fanaticism so extravagant; the explanation must be sought in the insufferable conditions of society, and in the absence of a vital Christianity, capable of assuaging sorrow, and of inspiring fortitude, toil, and hope.

Literary  
Pessimism  
in Russia.

But Russia contains Pessimists of the highest literary grade. Among these may be mentioned the popular author, (Tölstoi. It has been surmised that his unhappy disposition may have been fostered by the premature success he met with in his literary career, which left him little to look forward to and to hope for. Though favoured with health, fortune, family connections, and literary renown, he found no satisfaction in his vocation, and professedly hated life, and despised the human species.)

In accounting for principles so monstrously perverted, it is not sufficient to remember that in

Russia literature and art are afflicted with melancholy, that Nature is for the most part sombre and hard, that the Russian people seem to be by nature and education insusceptible to those Western ideas which are adopted rather than appropriated by the cultivated and political classes. The political state of the empire, perplexing and unique as it is, may well engender hopelessness. The cynical tone said to be characteristic of the society of St. Petersburg, and the prevalence of despair among the sects just referred to, are evidences from widely different quarters of a state of feeling favourable to the reception and the spread of Pessimistic views of human life.

Explanation  
of Russian  
Pessimism.

The Pessimistic theory, however, has a hold upon the minds of many of the intellectual and literary class amongst our fellow-countrymen, and Pessimistic doctrines and views of human life are openly advocated by English writers in this country.

The strain  
of  
Pessimism  
in English  
literature.

A very few years since, Mr. James Payn, a very successful *littérateur*, wrote in the *Nineteenth Century* an article<sup>1</sup> entitled *The Midway Inn*, containing such reflections as may be supposed to occur to a hard-working professional man, who has reached middle age. It is impossible to read this original and interesting, but very mournful, article, without feeling that the writer regards

The avowed  
Pessimism  
of Mr.  
James  
Payn.

<sup>1</sup> May, 1879. The article has since been republished in a volume of essays by Mr. Payn.

human life, even to the successful, as a bitter disappointment. He puts the matter very plainly in this language:—

“The question, Is Life worth Living? is one that concerns philosophers and metaphysicians; but the question, Do I wish to be out of it? is one that is getting answered very widely, and in the affirmative. This was certainly not the case in the days of our grandsires.”

And again:—

“The gift of old age is unwished-for, and the prospect of future life without encouragement. It is the modern conviction that there will be some kind of work in it; and even though what we shall be set to do may be wrought with ‘tumult of acclaim,’ we have had enough of work. What follows, almost as a matter of course, is that the thought of possible extinction has lost its terrors.”

His  
assertions  
concerning  
men's  
weariness  
of life.

It might be supposed that weariness and disgust of life will lead to something worse than bitter words. If existence is so wretched, it is not to be supposed that men will continue to endure it, when (as Epictetus phrased it) “the door is open.” Mr. Payn affirms that suicide is probably far more frequent than is publicly admitted, and is of opinion that it would be even more common were it not for the fear lest the life-assurance companies should withhold from the mourning family the sum secured as a provision against want.

The *Spectator*<sup>1</sup> commenting in a leading article upon Mr. Payn's essay, remarked upon one peculiarity of the Pessimism it revealed:—

<sup>1</sup> May 3rd, 1879,

"Melancholy, ennui, weariness to-day comes chiefly to the workers, and makes men miserable who are toiling like navvies for a success, or an object, which, when attained, will be, they know, like ashes in their mouths. . . . They are weary of it all, even in middle age."

The melancholy of men of middle age.

In the opinion of the *Spectator* this state of mind is due partly to a want of hope in a future life, and partly to a development of the imagination, producing a chasm between what men are and what they would if they could be, a disparity between their "brain muscle," and the work unconsciously required of it.

Mr. Richard Jefferies, a charming and popular writer upon natural history, in *The Story of my Heart*, a sort of autobiographical confession, thus avows his Pessimism:—

"How can I adequately express my contempt for the assertion that all things occur for the best, for a wise and beneficent end, and are ordered by a humane intelligence? It is the most utter falsehood, and a crime against the human race. . . . Human suffering is so great, so endless, so awful, that I can hardly write of it. I could not go into hospitals and face it, as some do, lest my mind should be temporarily overcome. The whole and the worst the worst Pessimist can say is far beneath the least particle of the truth, so immense is the misery of man. It is the duty of all rational beings to acknowledge the truth. There is not the least trace of directing intelligence in human affairs. . . . Any one who will consider the affairs of the world at large, and of the individual, will see that they do not proceed in the manner they would do for our happiness if a man of humane breadth of view were placed at their head with unlimited power, such as is credited to the intelligence which does not exist. A man of intellect and humanity could cause everything to happen in an infinitely superior manner."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Jefferies' avowal of Pessimism



Here is another passage from the same book,—  
inexpressibly mournful:—

Disbelief  
in a  
benevolent  
Creator.

“For grief there is no known consolation. It is useless to fill our hearts with bubbles. A loved one is gone, and as to the future—if there is a future—it is unknown. To assure ourselves otherwise, is to soothe the mind with illusions; the bitterness is inconsolable.”

Pessimism  
in poetry.

Nor is contemporary Pessimism confined to prose. The following very beautiful but very sad stanzas are from a short poem significantly entitled *The Age of Despair*, included in a little volume of poems by Mr. H. D. Traill, *Recaptured Rhymes*.

“Dead is for us the rose we know must die;  
Long ere we drain the goblet it is dry;  
And even as we kiss, the distant grave  
Chills the warm lip, and dims the lustrous eye.

Too far our race has journey'd from its birth;  
Too far death casts his shadow o'er the earth.  
Ah, what remains to strengthen and support  
Our hearts since they have lost the trick of mirth?

The stay of fortitude? The lofty pride  
Wherewith the sages of the Porch denied  
That pain and death are evils, and proclaimed  
Lawful the exit of the suicide?

Alas, not so! no Stoic calm is ours;  
We dread the thorns who joy not in the flowers.  
We dare not breathe the mountain-air of pain,  
Droop as we may in pleasure's stifling bowers.

\* \* \* \* \*

What profits it, if here and there we see  
A spirit nerved by trust in God's decree,  
Who fronts the grave in firmness of the faith  
Taught by the Carpenter of Galilee?

Who needs not wine nor roses, lute nor lyre,  
Scorns life, or quits it by the gate of fire,  
Erect and fearless—what is that to us  
Who hold him for the dupe of vain desire?

Can we who wake enjoy the dreamer's dream?  
Will the parched treeless waste less hideous seem  
Because there shines before some foolish eyes  
Mirage of waving wood and silver stream?"

Germany is however the favoured and congenial home of theoretical Pessimism. The two great German advocates of this doctrine—Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann—have obtained European reputation; and their works are now being reproduced in English in the Foreign Philosophical Library, so that there is every probability of their becoming very much more generally known in this country.

The great work of Schopenhauer—*Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* (The World as Will and as Representation, or Idea), has every claim to be regarded as the authoritative manual of German Pessimism, of which it both lays the metaphysical foundations and explicates the practical consequences.

Schopenhauer was until late in life almost utterly unnoticed by the devotees of Philosophy; it was only during the last ten years of his course that he became famous, and that was in consequence of his less systematic and more comprehensible work, published in 1851, the *Parerga und Paralipomena*. In contrast to this neglect was the

(Germany  
the home  
of the  
modern  
Pessimism)

Schopenhauer's  
career.

Hartmann's  
history.

popularity secured and enjoyed by Hartmann, the second great light of the Pessimistic philosophy, whose chief work was published in 1868, and has gone through many editions. More a man of the world than his master, although a vastly inferior writer, he has gained the attention of the reading public of Germany, and his writings are eagerly read by a large circle of admirers.

The German  
love of  
meta-  
physical  
novelty, and  
quest of  
the theory  
of know-  
ledge and  
being.

In endeavouring to account for the rise of speculative Pessimism in Germany, the land beyond all others of general education, the land in which the learned class holds the largest ratio to the population, we must not lose sight of the philosophical tendency which has so conspicuously characterised the Teutonic mind during the whole of the present century. Ever since the new impulse given by Kant's *Critique (Kritik)* at the close of the last century, an almost unbroken succession of theories of knowledge and of being have claimed the attention of the inquisitive lovers of novelty. It would seem as if, with Hegel, the circle of possible metaphysic must have been completed, as if no other path could be struck out. And the original speculations of Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann partake of the nature of paradox. Reason having exhausted itself, it would seem that a Philosophy of Unreason alone remained, by which to startle the human mind, and to acquire notoriety. The Idea, the Reason, might be altogether dis-

The  
Pessimists  
advocated  
the philo-  
sophy of  
Unreason.

placed, and the blind and purposeless *Will*, or the incomprehensible and uncomprehending *Unconscious*, might take its place.

#### IV.

#### THE METAPHYSICAL BASES OF PESSIMISM.

THE ethical doctrines of the Pessimists are based upon metaphysical foundations. It is necessary, therefore, to give a brief outline of the philosophy of Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann. These metaphysical speculations are somewhat abstruse; and many persons adopt Pessimistic views, as they do the views advocated by the expounders of other theories of life, without concerning themselves with their philosophical bases.

The ethics of Pessimism based upon a metaphysical foundation.

Kant had taught that all our knowledge, being conditioned by the forms of thought supplied by our mental constitution, is phenomenal, and of subjective value only. At the same time he believed in the *Ding an sich*, or "thing in itself," although he regarded this as unknowable. These doctrines suggested many speculations regarding the nature of knowledge,—speculations which have constituted the bulk of German metaphysics during this century. The names of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, will occur to readers of philosophical literature, as indicating the successive developments of post-Kantian philosophy during the first half of this century.

Kant's limitation of knowledge to the phenomenal.

Schopenhauer's  
repudiation  
of Hegel-  
ianism.

Now, Schopenhauer took no notice of the German metaphysicians who followed Kant, and indeed was bitterly hostile to his great and fortunate rival, Hegel. It was an evidence of the meanness of his character, that he despised the "Professors" of the German Universities, who, as he maintained, taught doctrines agreeable to the Governments and to the Churches, for the sake of place, profit, and social consideration. For himself, he was soured by the utter neglect which his philosophy met with for more than thirty years, and was no doubt confirmed by his ill-fortune in his hatred and contempt of his fellow-men.

His  
acceptance  
of the  
Kantian  
distinction  
between the  
phenomenal  
and the  
real.

Accepting the doctrine of the Critical Philosophy, so far as it distinguished between the phenomenal and the real, Schopenhauer asserted that we *have* knowledge of the latter. In his view, the real essence, the substantial source and explanation of all things, is WILL. But by Will he means not only what we are accustomed to designate by that term, but the great forces of Nature, the instincts and impulses of organic life, as seen in plants and animals, and the promptings and purposes of human beings. Motion, in all its varied forms, seems thus to be metaphysically accounted for. The one real, deep, eternal, and irresistible Power of Nature is Will, which manifests itself in all the processes of inanimate existence, as well as in all the activities of living things.

His con-  
viction that  
we do know  
the real,  
viz., The  
WILL.



The World has, so to speak, two sides. On the one side it is REPRESENTATION, or Idea (*Die Welt ist Vorstellung*). The world, as representation, has two indivisible halves, the Object and the Subject, every object existing under the forms of time, space, and causality, and having a relative existence, *i.e.*, through and for something beside itself. By a process of reasoning, which cannot be made intelligible in a few words, Schopenhauer comes to the conclusion that we must seek elsewhere than in that "representation," which is one aspect of the world, and which consists of the two elements mentioned, for the innermost essence of the Universe.

The World is—1. Representation or Idea.

The other side of the World is this: The World is my WILL (*Die Welt ist mein Wille*). We can go deeper than that "representation," which, if it were all, would make the Universe a dream. We are conscious that movements of our body are due to acts of Will. Although in reflection we can distinguish between Will and action, in reality the two are one. Pain and joy are immediate affections of the will. The body is, to use the awkward language of German metaphysics, "the objectification of the will." In self-consciousness the will is known immediately, bodily impulses are apprehended as symptoms of the action of the will.

It is also 2. Will, by which Schopenhauer means Force.

Now, by analogy, Schopenhauer recognizes Will

as universally present in nature. The Will is "objectified" by certain steps, *e.g.*, forces in inorganic nature, forms in organic nature, partially corresponding to the Platonic "ideas." But it is one and the same Will whose presence is recognized on every side. It is this that accounts for all the changes, movements, and processes of nature, of life.

Will is "the will to live."

The universal Will is a will to live. Amid its manifold appearances we discern its unity. The rush of this vast Force into activity accounts for all the phenomena of the Universe. Hence the endless and irreconcilable strife which the world presents to the observer, and which indeed he feels in his own nature. The impulses come into conflict with one another, so that none can be realized, can find satisfaction. (Life, Consciousness, *Suffering*,—these are the results of "the Will to live," which realizes itself in individual experience, and in the history of the human race. Each man has a natural desire to live, wrought within him by the unconscious Force of nature,—a desire which it is his mysterious prerogative to affirm or to deny. In affirming it, he seals his doom to irremediable misery.)

It issues of necessity in suffering to the individual.

The "will to live" prompts to love and marriage.

This same "Will to live" manifests its nature and its power in another direction. It works upon the individual for ends beyond himself. As a means to secure the continuance of the species, it takes within the individual the form of sexual love. The reproductive instinct is thus the ally and

the complement of the nutritive instinct. Whilst the individual is deluded into believing that in marriage he is acting for his own gratification and satisfaction, the truth is that he is seeking, though unconsciously, the perpetuation of the race. He thus becomes the unwitting instrument in prolonging human misery. The individual must vanish, and his own personal wretchedness may be lulled into oblivion. But crafty nature takes care that by begetting children he shall do his part to perpetuate the misery of mankind!

It thus secures the perpetuation of the race and of misery.

The ethical doctrine of Schopenhauer—if ethical it may be called—is based upon his teaching with regard to the Will. In the fourth book of his great work he treats of “the conscious affirmation and denial of the Will to live.”

It is Will that is the source of all being; the world has come into existence because Will is. This supreme power of the Universe, manifesting itself as the “will to live,” is at the root of all evil. To resist death is alike a necessity and a misfortune. The individual man is impelled by the great natural force to dread and to avert the cessation of being, and to use means for the preservation of life,—to provide nourishment for the body, and to repel disease and death. Nature thus secures the perpetuation of human wretchedness.

Here is the root of all wretchedness.

If the WILL is the key-note to Schopenhauer's philosophy; that of Hartmann's doctrines is the

Hartmann's  
doctrine of  
the Uncon-  
scious.

UNCONSCIOUS. Eduard von Hartmann agreed with his predecessor in the belief that the world, being due to a non-rational Will, is a blunder, is a bad world, and that non-existence is better than existence.

According with the ethical superstructure reared by his master, Hartmann sought to lay for it a deeper and broader metaphysical foundation. Opposed—as all the Pessimists have been—to Hegel, he utterly rejected Reason, as the ultimate and absolute principle of the Universe. He introduced the philosophy of the Unconscious (*Philosophie des Unbewussten*), which represents the great secret force and explanation of all things as being *The Unconscious*; which, however, has virtue to organize, and which, in the pursuit of a great aim (Zweck) gives rise to the Universe in all its phases.

Going below  
Conscious-  
ness, he  
believes that  
he finds  
there the  
ultimate  
Principle of  
all being.

Kant had said that to claim to possess ideas, and yet not to be conscious of them, is a contradiction in terms. Hartmann admits that “unconscious representation” has the air of a paradox. But since the domain of Consciousness is a well-tilled vineyard which can yield little more to the labour of the student, perhaps he who digs below the surface may find golden treasure in the hidden depths of the Unconscious. Well-known mental phenomena suggest the existence of unconscious representations and volitions; may they not be indications of that “all-one” principle,



which may be accepted as the final and universal explanation furnished by monistic philosophy?

From the Vedanta philosophy of the East down to Schopenhauer, profound speculators—so Hartmann thought—had gained glimpses of the great truth that the Unconscious is the central principle of philosophy, and the central power of the world. But the bold and ardent young Pessimist of Germany claimed to have been the first to bring this truth into the full light of day.

Intimations  
of this  
Principle  
prepared the  
way for  
Hartmann.

We intuitively know that many of our own actions are the expression of purpose; and analogy leads us to suppose that there is intention in Nature, that design may be recognized in the constitution of the world. There are, however, automatic movements and instinctive actions,—purposeful, without any consciousness of purpose. Unconscious Will is to be postulated as accounting for such movements as these.

What Christians refer to a Divine Artificer, who acts according to wisdom and goodness, Hartmann refers to the Unconscious Will. He thus accounts for the great emotions and impulses which are characteristic of humanity, for æsthetic and moral judgments, for *a priori* beliefs, for religious principles, and for the development of human history. So-called philosophy has given birth to no more signal master-piece of unreason than Hartmann's account of the emergence of Consciousness into

Unconscious  
Will is  
regarded  
as the key  
to many  
mysteries.



The genesis  
of Con-  
sciousness.

existence, out of a Universe governed by Unconscious Will. Consciousness is said to owe its being to the tearing away of the Representation from its mother-earth, *i.e.*, from the Will, to its realization of itself, and to the opposition of the Will to this emancipation of the Representation from its own control. The shock which follows this rebellion, the penetration of the Representation into the Unconscious, is Consciousness!

The reader will judge from these representations of Pessimist metaphysics, as to the likelihood of such writers producing a sober, credible, reasonable system of morals. It must be admitted that, however sophistical his reasoning, Hartmann has the art, when he comes to deal with real life, of interesting the curious, inquisitive reader. His aim is to depict the marvellous wisdom of the Unconscious! Leibnitz had taught, in the confidence of Optimism, that of all possible worlds this is the best. Schopenhauer had maintained the opposite theory that this world is the worst possible. Strangely enough, Hartmann holds, in language at least, by the belief of Leibnitz. How can this be Pessimism? (The fact is, that Hartmann means that no worse world could have remained in existence, for, in his opinion, this world is so bad that no world at all would have been far better.) Non-existence is preferable to this existence, and indeed to any existence that is possible!

Nonentity  
is preferable  
to existence.

The obvious question arises: Since human life is so wretched, how is it that men not only continue to live, but either find, or fancy that they find, in life compensation for its ills? The Pessimist's answer is: Men are reconciled to life by the power of successive illusions, devised by the craft and cunning of the Unconscious! If men saw existence as it really is, they would not submit to endure it. But nature has provided against such an issue. The unconscious Will has implanted in the human heart illusions so powerful, and so rapid in their successive appearance, that men are willing and even anxious to live.

The illusions by which the Unconscious Will induces men to live.

Three stages of illusion are described by Hartmann in a passage which has become somewhat famous.

1. Happiness is thought to be actually attainable in this present life. Such is the belief of youth, and of the childhood of the race. Reviewing in detail the several occasions of pleasure and satisfaction, Hartmann exhibits what he deems the (excess in every case of pain over pleasure.) The imagination is prompted to depict joys which are never realized. Health, youth, liberty, give no positive excess of pleasure. Love is not only disappointing; it is, for the individual experiencing it, an actual evil. Sympathy, friendship, family relations, yield no real happiness. Vanity, pride, glory, are all delusive. Religious edification has, it is true,

The first illusion: that this present life may yield happiness.

The vanity  
of earthly  
delights.

its own consolations ; but in its higher stages joy is seldom attained, and then only by means of severe self-~~denial~~, whilst the lower stages of the religious life are accompanied by fear, doubt, and anguish. Immorality is practised for the sake of the gratification it is expected to yield ; but on the whole it is productive of pain. The delights of science and art are accessible to but a small minority of mankind, and they render their cultivators liable to keen and varied suffering. Sleep and dreams bring no real, lasting relief. The quest of property is laborious, anxious, and disappointing. Hope itself is delusive and vain.

In this desultory and illogical way the Pessimist endeavours to show that, whilst nature urges men to seek enjoyment in a multiplicity of ways, she always mocks the victims she deludes. All is vanity : pains are many, and pleasures few.

2. The Unconscious is not satisfied to rob the present of all its joy ; it attacks the future ; first deluding men by promising blessings in immortality, and then blasting the hopes it has fostered. Those who have renounced all hope of happiness in this world may, nevertheless, look forward to a world to come, and may support and cheer themselves with the fond hope of eternal felicity. The religion of Christ is represented by Hartmann as corresponding with this phase of individual experience ; for long centuries Christian

The second  
illusion :  
that there is  
a heaven of  
felicity in  
the future.

Faith has encouraged men to bear the ills of life with fortitude, upheld by the hope of blessedness hereafter. The Pessimist naturally makes it his business to exhibit the baselessness of such a hope, the utter vanity of the cherished expectation of the individual, conscious life beyond the grave.

3. The great *Unconscious* power of the Universe has not, in these two stages of illusion, exhausted its malignant hostility to man. Amongst those who have ceased to hope, either for pleasure in this life, or for the joys of immortality, there are some who cherish bright anticipations of the future of humanity. Thus there opens up to many unselfish souls a golden dream. Hartmann presumes that many of his readers will, at this point, abandon his guidance, will refuse to cast away their hope of the amelioration of the human lot, will dare to anticipate that coming generations may find life a better and a brighter thing,—perhaps, in some slight measure, through their own efforts and sacrifices. He accordingly makes it his aim to cloud this bright vision of the future. He argues that there is no reasonable prospect of substantial improvement in the condition of mankind,—no ground for hoping that the progress of civilization, of art, of knowledge, of religion, will remove or relieve human ills, will bring any accession to human happiness. There is no more hope for humanity in this life than in any life to come.

The third illusion: that there is a bright prospect before human society on earth.



The success  
of the  
charmer.

Thus the Unconscious flings her enchantment but too successfully over the sanguine and visionary nature of man, only to laugh at those whom she has ensnared. In Philosophy, comfort, strength, hope, are not to be found; her light is clear, but unsympathetic and cold. The veil of Maja is on the face of mortal men.

## V.

### THE PESSIMISM OF SCHOPENHAUER AND VON HARTMANN EXPLAINED.

The energy  
of will  
arouses  
desire and  
effort which  
are de-  
structive of  
happiness.

SCHOPENHAUER'S central ethical doctrine was the essential evil and misery of Will. This is the spring of efforts the most painful, of desires the most unquenchable. Will awakens from the Unconscious, with boundless wants, and with inexhaustible claims. Every satisfied wish immediately begets a new craving. Thus Life proves itself a deceit, affording no satisfaction, no repose. Happiness may be imagined in the past or in the future, the present certainly knows it not, being filled with insatiable desire. The will to live still asserts itself under a thousand disappointments. What are old age and death but the sentence of condemnation, passed and executed by nature, upon man's will to live? The happiest moment of life is that of falling asleep, and forgetting life's wretchedness;



the most miserable moment is that of awaking to sad reality. Who would persevere in life were death less frightful?

The great principle of Pessimism is, that all life is suffering (*alles Leben Leiden ist*). Man, being what Schopenhauer calls "the most perfect objectification of the will to live," is of all beings the most necessitous, the most dissatisfied, and the most unhappy. He is constrained by his nature to long for what he has not. If he desires, and endeavours to obtain, such experience of effort is merely painful; if, on the other hand, he comes to possess what he seeks, possession takes away all charm from the object he has desired. Thus his alternative is between the wretchedness of unsatisfied desire, and the *ennui* of satiated possession; and in either case no happiness can be realized!

The many who seek are wretched because of unsatisfied desire; the few who find are wretched because of *ennui*.

(It is part of the Pessimistic doctrine that nothing is absolutely good, although some things are better than others, that pain is positive, and that pleasure is only negative.) This unjust and gloomy *dictum* is in opposition to Leibnitz's optimistic judgment, that pleasure is positive, and pain is negative only. There does not seem to be much meaning in the language so employed. The two are opposites, and the affirmation of the one is the denial of the other. But both pleasure and pain are real, actual experiences. By asserting that pleasure is only negative, the Pessimists intend to depreciate its

Pain is positive; pleasure is negative.

value, and so far the epithet is one it is unfair to apply. Just as pleasure is nothing but the negation of pain, so right is merely the negation of wrong: a dogma evidently intended to disparage rectitude and duty.

The hatred  
felt by the  
Pessimists  
for  
Optimism.

The Pessimist not only differs from the Optimist, he regards the Optimistic system with hatred, as "an impious system." He who maintains that all things are for the best, and that happiness is within the reach of man, is regarded as holding a doctrine which is a reproach and insult to the human lot, as a lot of necessary and ceaseless suffering. It is thus made every man's duty, if the word "duty" is admissible, to be miserable himself, and to account all other men equally miserable.

Suicide is  
condemned,  
as prompted,  
not by  
hatred of  
life, but by  
hatred of  
pain.

It is an obvious question to ask: If existence be so evil, and if death be annihilation, why does not the Pessimist put an end, by suicide, at once to life and to suffering? But his answer is, that the suicide is a witness to the value of life, and to the evil of pain only, for he slays himself—not to escape life—but to avoid pain. Physical suicide is vain. Moral suicide should be tried. Let a man be truly wise, and see the vanity of willing; let him by meditation rise above volition, and so seek annihilation, which alone is blessedness; let him quit the life of effort, and enter the Nirvana of eternal rest!

The only prospect for humanity which can afford

any comfort is the prospect of annihilation. This, according to the Pessimist theory, is to be brought about (as has been said) by a denial of the will to live. But there is upon this point a difference, almost amusing to consider, between the two German champions of the doctrine. The elder—Schopenhauer—would have each man act for himself, and negative that will to live which involves men in misery so great. The younger—Hartmann—thinks that each man should for the present affirm the will to live, and that efforts should be made to promote amongst men a knowledge of the cause and of the cure of life's wretchedness, so that a general determination may in due time be arrived at by all the members of the race, who may by one great and combined effort achieve the wished-for and happy result, the extinction of human life and consciousness, and the relapse into universal oblivion and repose!

Schopenhauer would have each man deny the will to live.

Hartmann would have the individual affirm the will to live until all men are prepared simultaneously to deny it.

Meanwhile, however, it is fair to remark that the exponents of the system have done little in the way of example to further the desiderated end. Schopenhauer was a sensual and selfish hermit, who husbanded his inherited resources, and lived in misanthropy indeed, but in comfort, to a fair old age, fearing nothing more than sickness and death. Hartmann lives, it is said, a happy family life, in competency and elegance, and in social esteem.

The inconsistency between profession and actual life.

The contrast  
in this  
respect  
between  
Sakya  
Mouni and  
Paul on the  
one hand,  
and Schop-  
enhauer  
and Von  
Hartmann  
on the  
other.

It would not, indeed, be fair in every case to test doctrines by the life and practice of their exponents and promulgators. But it is instructive to remember that the greatest missionaries of the world have been men whose conduct has accorded with their teaching. Sakya Mouni, the founder of the Oriental Pessimism, renounced the position, the dignities, the wealth, the opportunities of ease and enjoyment to which he was born, and lived a self-sacrificing life of sympathy and charity amongst men. Paul, the apostle of Christ to the Gentiles, was not satisfied with bidding men live, not to themselves, but to the Lord; he actually did count all things but loss for his Saviour's sake, and lived, suffered, and died to promote the gospel he proclaimed. Very different has been the practice of those who, in our own time, have made it their business to publish to their fellow-men the depressing tidings of a godless universe, and of irremediable despair!

The  
consolations  
of Pes-  
simism.

It may be asked, What temporary practical relief or consolation does Pessimism offer? Divested of metaphysical terminology, the answer of Schopenhauer to this question is threefold.

Art.

1. *Art.* The works of genius, embodied in architecture, painting, poetry, and music, when contemplated by the mind, afford a real delight. The artist perceives and communicates the everlasting ideas, which are apprehended by pure contemplation,



and which are esteemed the substantial and enduring part of all the phenomena encountered in the world of sense. It will be observed by the reader that the author of *Natural Religion* has warmly adopted this part of the creed of Schopenhauer.

2. *Sympathy*. All men are fellow-sufferers, and it is well to acknowledge this community in a heritage of woe. The admission that compassion and love are virtues to be cultivated, is the best feature in the Pessimist teaching; but instead of sympathy being based upon brotherhood in a divine family, it is here merely commiseration with those who are doomed to the same misfortunes with ourselves.

Sympathy.

3. *Asceticism*. The denial of the will to live will most appropriately take this form. Let a man refuse to be deluded by the craft of the unconscious Will, let him voluntarily abstain from the deceitful pleasures of this life, let him regard with indifference those interests which appear to be his, but which are in reality the interests of the species, let him be upon his guard against the delusive "principle of individuation," and he will do all that in him lies to defeat the machinations of the great enemy, and to secure the diminution of the ills of conscious and voluntary existence. The mystics, whose quietism is an abdication of the faculty of willing; the ascetics, whether Oriental or Christian, who live apart from society, and indifferent

Asceticism.



to the pursuits and pleasures of mankind;—these have chosen the better part. For true salvation and release from life and its accompanying pain are utterly impossible without the abnegation of Will.

The estimation in which the Pessimist philosophers hold the Scriptures.

It is instructive to notice what is the attitude of the Pessimists towards the revealed Word of God. Schopenhauer makes a marked distinction between the Scriptures of the Old Testament and those of the New.

Their dislike of the general teaching of the Old Testament.

The Pessimists are severe, and even bitter, in their condemnation of what they regard as the Optimistic teaching and spirit of the Old Testament. Their resentment is roused by the account given in Genesis of the Creation, in which all things are pronounced to be “very good.” The bright and cheerful view of human life, taken by the ancient Hebrews generally, is repugnant to the tastes and principles of the Pessimists; but certain passages, as for instance some of the mournful conclusions of the writer of Ecclesiastes, are more to their mind than the rest. The one Old Testament doctrine with which Schopenhauer is in full sympathy is that of the fall of man.

The Christianity of the New Testament, on the other hand, is commended, as according with the ethical spirit of Brahmanism and Buddhism! “In the New Testament . . . the world is represented as a vale of tears, life is a means of purifying the

soul, and an instrument of martyrdom is the symbol of Christendom."

Of *Redemption*, as propounded in the Christian Scriptures, Pessimism takes no notice. So far as Christ renounced the will to live, Schopenhauer approves His choice and His example. So far as the Christian takes up his Master's cross, *i.e.*, lives a life and dies a death of self-mortification, the Pessimist commends his conduct. But this mortification is, in his view, a mere abjuring of life's pleasures; and Christ's work he regards not as a rescuing of men from sin and destruction, but as an example of the renunciation of the will to live. The Christian rejoices in salvation, the Pessimist only hopes for annihilation.) In the Pessimist's view Christianity represents the will to live as personified in Adam, with whom we sin; and that unwillingness to live, which is the only method of relief, as personified in Christ. But to the Christian his religion represents the Saviour as living and dying for man's deliverance from sin, and its curse and power. Life is indeed admitted to abound in suffering, but the inspired writers exhibit pain and weakness, sorrow and trouble, temptation and perplexity, as the appointed means of spiritual discipline, of progress in a God-ward course. The Pessimist views life's ills not so much as means by which we may, by God's grace, cease from *sin*, as means by which we may cease to *live*, and cease to

Their approval of the New Testament is based upon a misconception.

Christianity would deliver men from sin; Pessimism would deliver them from the misery of conscious being.

Opposition  
between  
Pessimism  
and Chris-  
tianity.

suffer. The 'Christian' doctrine of salvation by faith, and not by works, is oddly distorted by Schopenhauer. In *works* he sees the expression of the will which he hates; but for him *faith* is in knowledge, and intellectual contemplation brings man some small relief from woe! Christianity holds out a prospect of improvement in the state of human society, and of a moral perfection to be attained in the eternal Hereafter. In Schopenhauer's judgment, all that man can do to ameliorate his condition is to turn away from life and its pains, and seek,—like the Hindu who longs for absorption into Brahma,—like the Buddhist who aspires to Nirvana,—to be restored to that nothingness which alone is painlessness and peace.

The  
Pessimist's  
preference of  
Catholicism  
to Pro-  
testantism.

No wonder that the great Pessimist preferred Catholicism to Protestantism; for its asceticism, monasticism, and mortification, were, in his view, wise exercises of the Will in the denial of life.

It will assist the reader to realize the extraordinary and extravagant beliefs of the Pessimists if we collect and lay before him a few of the observations and reflections which human life has suggested to Schopenhauer. Some of them are shocking to the moral sensibility, and some of them approach blasphemy. But it is well that it should be understood what are the sentiments of a school credited by many in our day and in our civilized and Christian society with profound and practical wisdom.

Here are some statements regarding our existence generally :

"The end of human existence is suffering." "The life of man is a struggle for existence, with the certainty of being conquered ;" "a voyage in which there is before every mariner the sure prospect of shipwreck." "It is the superior knowledge of man which renders his life more rich in suffering than that of the animals." "When we consider the suffering on this planet, we see that the moon, where is no life, is preferable to the earth." "Accustom yourself to consider this world as a penal colony." ("The world, and consequently man, are such that they ought not to exist. A man should not address his neighbour as Sir ! but as My fellow-sufferer !") "Considering life under the aspect of its objective worth, it is at least doubtful whether it is preferable to nothingness, and I would even say that, if experience and reflection could make themselves heard, it is in favour of nothingness that they would raise their voice." "The life of man oscillates, like a pendulum, between suffering and weariness."

The  
paradoxes of  
Pessimism.

Such being represented as the real condition of humanity, how is it accounted for that men are so little alive to their wretchedness ? Here is the answer :

The illusions  
by which  
crafty  
Nature  
deceives  
men.

"Few men come to penetrate by reflection, the illusion of the principle of individuation. . . . Our will needs to be broken by a great suffering before it comes to renounce itself ;"

*i.e.*, man has to be taught, by bitter experience, that life yields no personal happiness, that nature is careless regarding the individual, and seeks only to secure her own blind ends.

Love and marriage are regarded with aversion, as the crafty means whereby the Unconscious (as Hartmann expresses it) perpetuates the race, and so perpetuates human misery.



The  
Pessimistic  
view of  
marriage.

"Sexual love is the will to live, *i.e.*, in the species. The importance of love cannot be exaggerated ;—it is the perpetuation of the race which is its aim." "Marriages of love are concluded in the interests of the species, not for the profit of the individual."

All this wretchedness is the work of hard, unfeeling Fate.

The irony  
of Fate.

"It seems as if Fate had wished to add derision to despair, filling our life with all the misfortunes of tragedy, and denying to us the dignity of tragic persons. Far from that, we inevitably play the sorry part of the comic."

Hostility to religion is, as a matter of course, characteristic of the whole system.

The hostility  
of Pessimism to  
religion.

"The misery which fills the world protests aloud against the hypothesis of a perfect work, due to a Being absolutely wise and good, and also almighty." "If a God has made this world, I should not like to be that God ; the misery of the world would break my heart." "Religions are the daughters of ignorance, and cannot long survive their mother." "Every positive religion usurps the throne which belongs to philosophy. Thus philosophers will always be at enmity with religion."<sup>1</sup>

Specimens of  
Pessimist  
extravagancies.

Among the extravagancies to which Pessimism has given rise may be mentioned such thorough-going cynicism and despair as those of Bahnsen, who believes that annihilation is impossible, that it is in vain to hope for any cessation of sorrow, in fact that misery is inevitable and eternal! With this may be classed such melancholy absurdities as that of the Russian Pessimist poet, Tölstoi, who expressed his deep regret that the arts of writing

<sup>1</sup> Some of the above quotations are taken from Bourdeau, *Pensées*, etc.



and of printing had been invented, and that, in consequence, it was not possible for his own writings to be destroyed, and so to cease from influencing the minds of his fellow-men.

## VI.

### THE UNREASONABLENESS OF PESSIMISM AS A PHILOSOPHY.

\*1. PESSIMISM is to be rejected, in the first place, because its metaphysical foundations are utterly irrational. The system rests upon a basis of avowed Unreason,—upon the postulate that blind, unconscious Will is the prime, all-controlling power of the Universe. The aim of many men of Science appears to be to construct such a theory of being as shall credibly account for all things without affirming, without requiring, the admission that there is a Divine Creator of all that exists, whose government is one of reason. They desire to evolve the reasonable out of irrationality. That there is purpose in the Universe, the most ordinary intelligence must recognize as evident. There is mathematical law, there are mechanical forces, there are vital powers, above all, there is the nature of man, marvellous for intellectual, and still more for moral and spiritual, capacity and faculty. What explanation is to be given of these tokens of design, of these apparent evidences of

The philosophical bases of Pessimism are irrational.

It evolves the reasonable from unreason.

Man's mind  
naturally  
looks for  
ideas, laws,  
causes, to  
account for  
phenomena.

mind, planning, governing, co-ordinating all things? It may be answered: Our minds are not capable of constructing the theory that seems to be required. We must content ourselves with the knowledge of phenomena. This reply is, of course, that of philosophical scepticism. It is to be observed, however, that those who profess to adopt this theory do not consistently carry it out, but constantly introduce ideas, laws, powers, —whenever it suits their purpose to do so,—in order to satisfy the natural desire for explanation and for unity. ( And there is no likelihood and no possibility of thinking men being content with a mere knowledge of phenomena; they will ever obey the intellectual demand for a knowledge of laws, causes, purposes, intellectual and moral aims.

Attempts to  
satisfy this  
intellectual  
longing  
without  
admitting  
a Personal  
Creator and  
Ruler.

Hence it is that theories have been devised which aim at satisfying the natural tendencies of men to theorize, and to construct satisfactory explanations of phenomena, without having recourse to what is sometimes called the hypothesis of a personal, rational, eternal, designing Creator and Lord. Pessimism has been described as offering a "metaphysic of materialism," as propounding a principle which may serve as a philosophical justification for atheism. We are told that it is far more reasonable to postulate an impersonal, unconscious Force—named Will—as the essence and cause of all material things and of all

living and all rational beings, than to believe in God. Now, it is difficult to understand what can possibly be meant by Purpose, unless a Being capable of foresight and of design be presumed, in whom purpose can reside, and operate, and by whom it can be carried into actuality. A greater absurdity than unconscious Will was never fashioned in the brain of an enthusiast. If we are told that by will we are to understand power, we ask, Whose power? or, The power of what Being, or Substance, or Cause? If an omnipotent will and an omniscient intelligence are included in the Unconscious, and if this Unconscious has accordingly created the mental and material universe, what can the Unconscious be, except another and misleading name for God, who—so far from being unconscious—is Himself Infinite Intuition and Infinite Reason? A more retrogressive and incredible doctrine than that of the Pessimists has never been devised, a doctrine so paradoxical as to set blind, unconscious Force above Reflection, Intelligence, and Reason!

Belief in God is philosophically more reasonable than belief in the Unconscious Will.

2. Another objection to the foundations of Pessimism is suggested by the unreasonableness of its psychology. If the blind Will, or the Unconscious, be the absolute existence, how can we account for the emergence of Consciousness? Religion has a very simple and sublime, and, to our minds, a very satisfactory answer to the inquiry as to the

The Psychology and Psychogeny of Pessimism are faulty.

The  
failure of  
Pessimism  
to account  
for Con-  
sciousness.

origin of the human soul: "God made man in His own image," "The inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding." But what does Pessimism say on this matter? According to Schopenhauer, the Will, moved by its blind and unconscious desire to live, at length reaches consciousness of itself in the human brain; but there also it loses all the illusions which had sustained, or rather bewildered it. The Will discovers, when in man it reaches the elevation of consciousness, that all reality is vain, that life is painful, that annihilation would be preferable. The height of perfection is the negation of the will to live. And, according to Hartmann, Consciousness arises through the shock which the Will experiences upon the rebellion of the Idea against the authority of its lord and master: when Representation penetrates into the Unconscious,—then Consciousness springs into being.

Who can be convinced that this is a just account of the origin of the mind of man, of the faculties which observe and reason upon the facts of Nature? The passage from unconsciousness to consciousness is a passage which cannot be thought. One mechanical force is changed into another without break of continuity, for all such forces are naturally correlated. But the chasm between mechanical force and mind is a chasm which cannot be bridged.



3. We deny the assumption made by Schopenhauer regarding the character of volition. According to the Pessimist, Will, effort, is in itself evil, and is productive only of misery. Because man is destined to will, and to will to live, he is said to be destined to wretchedness. Pleasure is represented as something purely or predominatingly passive,—as is sensation, or the æsthetic perception. To desire, to strive after, to toil for, any supposed satisfaction,—this is depicted as of necessity evil.

The account of volition and effort given by the Pessimists is incredible.

Now, this doctrine is not likely to meet with much acceptance from healthy, energetic natures, nor indeed from any who consider the high value of resolution and strenuous effort. A sound philosophy of human nature regards will, endeavour, persistent striving after a worthy object, as the truest and noblest discipline of humanity. It is not just to account Will to be the master, and Reason the servant; on the contrary Reason prescribes both the ends and the means of life, and the Will is entrusted with the office of carrying out the purposes conceived, approved, and adopted. And the pursuit of reasonable and righteous ends is the best of all employments. Endeavour is the indispensable condition of our highest life, our most precious knowledge and experience, and, so far from being the chief cause of human misery, is the chief cause of the greater

✓  
Endeavour, in subjection to reason, is the glory of human nature.



part of our cheerfulness, contentment, and even happiness.

On the assumption of Pessimism, is it likely that man will be able to defeat the designs of Nature?

4. A very obvious objection to the Pessimistic remedy for the evils of existence, has often been urged. Granting the possibility of a conspiracy among men to put an end to human consciousness, granting that the measures taken may prove effectual, what guarantee is there that the whole tragedy will not be repeated? Is the crafty unconscious Will to be checkmated by the short-sighted wisdom of those in whom it has become objectified? Surely the same force, which in some way has given birth to consciousness, may well refuse to be defeated in its design by the machinations of its own offspring! The prospect of a final escape from life and all its attendant and inevitable miseries, is a prospect which the Pessimist cannot reasonably expect to realize. Nature will prove too strong for man.

## VII.

### THE ERROR AND UNFAIRNESS OF THE PESSIMIST'S REPRESENTATION OF LIFE. THE TRUE SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM.

LOOKING at the great question before us,—not now in the philosophical light in which it has just been considered—but in the light afforded by the daily experience of practical men, we do not hesi-

tate to say that the representation of human life given by the Pessimists is altogether unjust. It is their unfair custom to quote as the deliberate judgment of great and wise men, passages from their works, which in some cases evidently expressed a passing or occasional feeling of dissatisfaction or despondency. But a difference is to be observed between the hasty or passionate utterances of men in certain moods, — sincere enough at the time, — and deliberate judgments gathering up lifelong experience.

The injustice of the Pessimist's view of human life.

Thus, passages like the following, however touching in themselves, and however effective in quotation, are scarcely authorities for Pessimism. Petrarch wrote: "Mille piacer non vagliono un tormento" (A thousand pleasures are no compensation for a single agony). Voltaire testified: "Le bonheur n'est qu'un rêve, et la douleur est réelle. Il-y-a quatre-vingt ans que je l'éprouve" (Happiness is but a dream, and pain is real. For eighty years I have experienced this). Calderon is quoted as having said: "The greatest crime of man is to have been born." Schopenhauer quotes, as descriptive of the ills of human society, the apophthegm: "Homo homini lupus" (Man is a wolf to his fellow-man).

Bitter sayings are often the fruit of bitter moods and bitter moments.

Language such as this may be quoted in abundance even from great and high-minded writers. And there are few men who, when vexed with the

The actual enjoyments of human life are many, and outweigh its ills.

Life's evils are often the result of sin.

cares of life, perplexed by its problems, disappointed in its projects, weary of its toils, have not now and again given way to the temptation to think and speak ill of this human existence.) But let a just and impartial mind carefully consider the enjoyments, the comforts, the opportunities of healthful exercise of body and of mind which this life affords; and let him then compare them with life's inevitable evils, with sickness, suffering, distressing weariness, privation, and disappointment; and the result will be a conviction that the good, in the majority of cases, far outweighs the evil.) This seems established by the fact that those who complain so bitterly of life are nevertheless usually most unwilling to part with it. They hold it dear, and use every method to prolong it.) It is indeed not commonly from the afflicted that these complaints arise; they are very often the morbid utterances of the discontent cherished by the favoured and prosperous. Many of the illusions which make human life, in the view of the Pessimist, so grievously evil, are simply the result of his own sin. If men expect from life what it is not intended to yield, if they desire everything to minister at all cost to their own personal gratification, if they regard the creature more than the Creator, no wonder if they are rudely awakened from their dream, and discover to their dismay that universal enjoyment is not the great end of God's universe.]

The philosophy of Pessimism may well be believed to have met with acceptance all the more, because the generation to which it has appealed is largely a materialistic, money-getting, pleasure-seeking generation. The royal author of the Book of Ecclesiastes seems to have sought satisfaction in all carnal delights, in the exercise of power, in the enjoyments of wealth, in the experience of material prosperity. And every reader of his instructive record of his thoughts and sentiments, must have had forced upon his mind the conclusion that his Pessimistic tone of mind was chiefly owing to the weariness of satiety to which he doomed himself—to the sinful endeavour to find satisfaction where satisfaction ought never to have been sought. This view of life continued until he was at length brought to the conclusion that the fear of God and the keeping of His commandments are the whole duty of man. The inclusion of this Book in the Canon of Scripture seems intended to remind men that this world cannot truly, fully, and for ever, bless those who regard created things rather than the Creator, the gifts rather than the Giver. The process by which the wise man came to his conclusion, “Vanity of vanities: all is vanity,” is a process which multitudes have repeated, and it is not surprising that the result has been the same. Men yield themselves to the fascinations of sense, they become lovers of the world, they live for self,

They who seek satisfaction in this world must be disappointed; their Hedonism will by revulsion lead to Pessimism.

for pleasure, wealth, and fame. And they wake to find they have been chasing an *ignis fatuus*, that they have been speeding towards a mirage of the desert never to be reached. And their disappointment lands them in despair, and the wail of hollow hopeless misery evinces at once the emptiness of the world and the retribution of a righteous God.

If pleasure were the highest good, then indeed to many life would not be worth living.

[ If life is to be estimated simply by balancing pains and pleasures, it may be a question whether, in all cases, life is worth living. In the teeming cities of China, as is well known, life is held very cheap, and men are found willing, for a small sum of money, to undergo a death penalty in the place of a condemned criminal. There are even in Europe countries where poverty is so burdensome, and where the conditions of life are so hard, that to live must be to suffer rather than to enjoy. And there are those in all communities who, from birth or by accident, are so crippled and disabled that they have of necessity a lot of pain and of infirmity, with few capacities for pleasure, and with little prospect of the alleviation of affliction. There are also what are called unfortunate temperaments, disposed to irritability or to melancholy. ]

The lessons of religion alone can suffice to console the unfortunate.

Now, human beings whose lot is so pitiable, may well—supposing them to be without the principles and consolations of Religion—come to the conclusion that life is a burden, that to exist is to suffer, that it were better not to be. The only



way in which to bring to them true relief of mind, patience, fortitude, and hope, is to convince them of the care of a superintending Providence, to lead them by the path of faith into the rest of submission, and to inspire them with the hope that as they are chastened, not for God's pleasure, but for their own profit, so the time shall come when they will look back with gratitude upon the discipline appointed for them, and will recognize in it the means by which they were taught lessons inestimably precious, and made partakers of a happiness unspeakably glorious.

The Pessimists represent all conscious life and all active exertion as of necessity miserable. We contend that this representation is unjust. It is often said that in a state of health the mere consciousness of existence is happiness. Without going to such a length, we would ask the reader to consider the several faculties of his nature, and to put to himself the question, Is their exercise, naturally and on the whole, in their normal condition, pleasurable or otherwise? Our senses, sight and hearing, for example; are they not the occasion of hourly enjoyment? That we see unpleasant sights, and hear discordant sounds, is true, but it is undeniable that the active exercise of the senses yields a preponderance of pleasure. It will scarcely be contended that to become deaf and blind would be an advantage, as rendering a

Enjoyment  
derivable  
from the  
right  
exercise of  
our  
faculties.

Provision  
made for the  
legitimate  
satisfaction  
of our  
appetites  
and  
instincts.

Our social  
affections  
sources of  
pleasure.

man insensible to the usually disagreeable sights and sounds to which the possessor of these senses is necessarily exposed.—We are created with appetites and instincts; can it be seriously maintained that these are the occasions of more pain than pleasure? The same Power that has given the craving has also provided for the legitimate satisfaction of the craving. In varying degrees these natural and primitive impulses of our nature are evidently the means of almost constant enjoyment.—Our social affections, if duly regulated, are the sources of life-long pleasure. It is not denied that here we are especially vulnerable. But love and friendship, notwithstanding the assertions of Pessimists to the contrary, are the wealth of our humanity. And who will question that even the wounded heart is not without compensations?

“’Tis better to have loved and lost,  
Than never to have loved at all.”

The exercise  
of our  
intellectual  
powers bring  
purest  
delight.

The intellectual powers, again, in their just and temperate exercise, bring the purest delight. We are told that he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. True, yet the capacity for joy is enlarged with the susceptibility to unhappiness arising from doubt and a widened horizon of sympathy. In fact, whilst we admit that human existence is a chequered scene, and that only the superficial can pronounce life all pleasure,—we still maintain that the proper exercise of human

powers brings satisfaction and happiness to the thoughtful and virtuous man. The arrangements of our life are decisive as to the benevolence of the Creator.

But do we deny the existence of evils,—of pain, disease, and privation? of sorrow and disappointment? of bereavement and anguish? By no means. The ills of human existence are real, and in very many cases are such that, if life were to be judged by a balancing of pains and pleasures, it would not be worth living. But those who believe in God, as revealed in the Scriptures, as manifested in Christ, are not without some kind of key to these phases of human experience. There is no malevolence in the Divine government. On the contrary, the ills as well as the joys of life are intended for the truest, highest good of men. Such good is not necessarily and always secured by trouble and sorrow. But in some measure it is so secured in the case of the submissive and obedient disciple of Christ, who learns to wear his Master's yoke, to bear his Saviour's cross. It is his happy conviction that whom He loveth God chasteneth, that they who partake Christ's death shall share His life, that if they suffer with Him they shall also reign with Him.

Existing  
evils  
admitted

The key  
to the  
explanation  
of them.

[ In fact, there is no possibility of understanding the perplexities of the human lot except by the perception of the two greatest facts in human

Sin and  
Redemption

history,—Sin and Redemption.] Sin accounts for the greater part of human misery, which is not a sign of Divine heartlessness or indifference, but of the rule of a righteous moral Governor, who, in the maintenance of His authority, and for the highest good of His subjects, will not suffer sin to be unpunished. All this the Pessimistic theory overlooks.

The evil of  
the world  
not irre-  
mediable.

And the Christian is assured that the evil of the world is not irremediable. His belief in the redemption of man—body and soul—by the obedience and sacrifice of the Incarnate Son of God, itself saves him from Pessimism. The mediatorial work of Christ changes the curse into a blessing. If sin abounds, grace much more abounds. The power of the Saviour's love, the efficacy of the Holy Spirit's operations are such that in their presence no evil is invincible, despair gives way to hope, and earth's darkest shades are pierced and irradiated by the beams of a heavenly day.

### VIII.

#### THE PRACTICAL EVILS CONNECTED WITH PESSIMISM. A COMPARISON BETWEEN PESSIMISM AND CHRISTIANITY.

It will be well now to glance at the consequences which might be expected to follow the prevalence of each of the alternative systems : Pessimism and Christianity.

A very natural result of the adoption of Pessimistic views must needs be the general prevalence of depression and of discontent. Pessimism is worse than some other forms of error, inasmuch as it not only undervalues the enjoyments of the present, but takes from its disciple all hope either of an improved condition of human society in this world, or of a blessed immortality hereafter. What motive is left to labour for human welfare, when human welfare is believed to be an impossibility? Who can bear the inevitable ills of human life, when unsupported by any prospect of alleviation, any expectation of future happiness? (To be other than depressed, melancholy, and discontented, would in a Pessimist be unreasonable and inconsistent. What would be the consequence of the general acceptance of such views as those described? Fancy a society, a nation, a world of Pessimists! It would become a society, a nation, a world of

The prevalence of Pessimism would create discontent.



madmen! And individuals adopting such principles could not fail to be a source of wretchedness in any community.)

Pessimism  
would rob  
Humanity  
of hope.

The "strength-inspiring aid" of hope is no inconsiderable factor in human society. This has been well expressed by Coleridge in the familiar lines:—

"Work, without hope, draws nectar in a sieve;  
And hope without an object cannot live."

A community of persons deprived of all expectation of individual happiness and social progress must be utterly paralyzed for all honest toil, all heroic self-devotion, all patient endurance. And if expectations are cherished, only to prove illusions, and to mock the misery of the disappointed, the case must be, if possible, even worse; by how much a cynical despair exceeds in wretchedness a settled stolid gloom.

It would  
encourage  
vice.

As to the morality which would accompany the popular acceptance of the Pessimistic theory, we may safely say that that theory supplies but few restraints from vice and crime, and but few motives to virtue. Asceticism might be the result in some few cases, but experience of human nature leads to the belief that the denial of God and the cultivation of hopelessness would more frequently issue in self-seeking and sensuality.

Compare the influence of the two systems respectively upon the conduct of human life. Men

by their constitution and their circumstances are, generally speaking, required to *work* and to *suffer*. That these are two great provinces of moral discipline can scarcely be questioned. The proportion of those who are exempt from toil and from "trials," and who, as life-long favourites of fortune, are largely occupied in enjoyment, is too small to be taken into account. Take human life at the average, and Christian and Pessimist will agree that it is chiefly occupied with bodily or mental toil, varied with frequent experiences of weakness, pain, sorrow, and disappointment. It is a fair test of the two theories of life, to consider which of them is the more fitted to assist men in the discharge of necessary duty, and in the endurance of inevitable trouble.

The influence of Pessimism and Christianity upon human nature and life compared.

Why should the Pessimist work with cheerfulness, diligence, and perseverance? The effort which is necessary is, in his apprehension, itself an evil. The ends to be attained by labour are for him the mere illusion created for its unconscious purposes by an unconscious force, having no excellence, and affording no satisfaction. In labour, he feels himself the wretched and passive instrument of a power which he hates. Nor is there any prospect of future results which can inspire the worker with a bright anticipation. He is satisfied that no real good can result from human effort. Human nature is essentially bad and unimprovable. Human life

Man must work; but the Pessimist has no sufficient motive to labour, nor to endure affliction.

is evil, and the alleviations are few and slight. Human history has no future to be contemplated with satisfaction, save the prospect of its own eternal annihilation. Why should the Pessimist consent to work for himself or for others?

On the other hand, Christianity places work in the highest position, and furnishes the worker with the highest motives.

On the other hand, let it be considered what motives the plainest and the least fortunate of Christians has to fulfil what he believes to be his appointed task, to pass through what to him is an ordained probation and discipline. His active nature he regards, not as a curse, but as a blessing; in its exercise he fulfils the true functions of his nature, realizes his ideal of human excellence, acquires those virtues which are the crown and glory of his being. To him, daily work is not the enforced service of a cruel serfdom, the tribute wrung from him by the violence of a ruthless tyrant. It is rather the opportunity of showing his fidelity and gratitude to a benevolent Ruler, an honoured and beloved Father. What he does, he aims at doing "as unto the Lord, not to men." Remembering his Master's words: "My meat and my drink is to do the will of my Father in heaven," he makes it his daily business to tread in that Master's steps, and to please and glorify his God.

Christianity imparts fortitude and hope to the sufferer.

But it is not to be lost sight of, that the Christian is not exempt from the afflictions which befall men generally. It is instructive to observe, however, that these afflictions are, in his view, neither un-

mitigated evil nor unrelieved by a prospect of their serving as means to highest good. They are believed and they are found, in common with all experiences providentially appointed, to "work together for good to them that love God ;" and they are also believed to work out for such "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

A comparison such as this furnishes us with the best reasons—as practical beings—for congratulating ourselves upon being Christians rather than Pessimists. Strength to work and strength to suffer, doubtless depend, to no small extent, upon the convictions which, as intelligent persons, we cherish with regard to our present position and our future prospects. Pessimism is not only unwarranted by reason ; it is condemned by experience as an unpractical and unworkable system. A community of Christians who lived up to their Christianity, would be heaven ; a community of Pessimists who lived down to their Pessimism, would be hell.

Reason and experience concur in approving Christianity, and in condemning Pessimism.

Let Pessimism triumph, and become the Philosophy, the Religion, of the future ; and what will the future witness ? The brightest prospect which opens up is a prospect of universal destruction, annihilation, the cessation of consciousness ; and that can scarcely be called in any sense a prospect, which is the prevalence of unconsciousness, of infinite, eternal night.

The awful prospect, should Pessimism triumph.

The glorious  
conse-  
quences of  
the victory  
of Chris-  
tianity.

Let Christianity be victorious, and realize the purposes and the predictions of its Divine Founder, and how utterly opposite, how unspeakably more blessed and glorious, the future of humanity! When all men are drawn unto Christ by the attractive power of His Cross, and by the gracious constraint of the Comforter whom He has sent; when the one new humanity is constituted and is complete in Him; when the reign of righteousness is established, and the law of love is supreme; then shall the spiritual Kingdom of the Eternal have come, and then shall the Will of the Holy Father,—not the blind, unconscious, imaginary force which the Pessimists have fashioned into an idol, before which they have fallen down and worshipped,—then shall the WILL of the HOLY FATHER be done on Earth as in Heaven!





# UTILITARIANISM:

AN

*Illogical and Irreligious Theory of Morals.*

BY THE

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AUTHOR OF

"THE WITNESS OF MAN'S MORAL NATURE TO CHRISTIANITY;"

"MODERN PESSIMISM," ETC.



THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY:

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## Argument of the Tract.

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WHILE Christianity regards man as a spiritual being, amenable to a Divine law, Physical Ethics consider him as an organism susceptible of pleasure and pain, and governed in conduct by this susceptibility.

Utilitarianism is defined as the system of Morals which teaches that Pleasure is the chief good, and the standard of right, but that the pleasures of others than the agent are to be sought. The ethical theories of Bentham, Mill, Sidgwick, and Herbert Spencer are explained. The prevalence and influence of Utilitarianism are shown and accounted for.

The first principle of this system, viz., that Pleasure is the standard of right, is contested. Pleasure is shown to have no claim to such a position, either when sought by the individual for himself, or when sought by the individual for society. The impossibility is made manifest of applying the test of pleasure and pain as consequences following upon action. The dangerous results which would ensue upon the adoption of the Utilitarian standard are exhibited. The relations between virtuous conduct and happiness are considered. It is shown that Utilitarianism gives no account of the moral imperative,—of duty and conscience. What is termed Christian Utilitarianism is considered, and its inconsistency is made apparent. Right is shown to be discoverable by considering human nature in its completeness,—by examining the moral order discernible in the Universe,—by pondering the character of the Divine Ruler.

The superiority of Christianity over Utilitarianism is then a conclusion exhibited in detail.

# UTILITARIANISM:

AN

Illogical and Irreligious Theory of Morals.



## INTRODUCTORY.



HERE is no question of the present day more debated among thoughtful men, or more vital to the prospects of human society, than the question as to the

The need of  
a reasonable  
foundation  
for human  
conduct.

foundation of right and duty. If to this opinion it be objected that men are generally agreed that certain actions are good and praiseworthy, and that others are evil and blamable, and that, this being the case, we need not trouble ourselves about "the why and the wherefore," the reply is, that to all who think, and sooner or later to all men, it must greatly matter what is the nature of the ground upon which obligation is believed to rest. A well-built house needs a sound foundation. Men will not always act, certainly in the times at hand they will not act, simply from habit, from tradition, from authority. Our times are times in which men ask a reason for everything, and in which they will not be content without a reason,

To neglect the principles underlying morality would be fatal to the best hopes of the future of humanity.

It is not to be expected that disagreeable duties will be readily performed, that a laborious and self-denying life will be cheerfully led, by men who do not understand why they should not abandon themselves to self-indulgence. Virtue must have its grounds, its sanctions, whether political, philosophical, or religious,—or all combined. Society will fall to pieces unless there are bonds strong enough to bind it together. If individual impulse and the desire for individual gratification become the principle of human action, men will return to the condition of the brute-beasts that roam through desert steppes or savage jungles. There are passions and notions and even principles abroad which, if unchecked, will lead to anarchy and to animalism. There would be no surer way of bringing these horrible evils upon mankind, than to cultivate indifference with regard to the principles of morality. It may be taken for granted that, if Christians do not inculcate and defend sound principles, there are those in abundance—the worst enemies of human society—who will take advantage of every opportunity to diffuse doctrines debasing and disastrous in their effects.

There are mainly two opposed theories of man's moral life.

There are now taken throughout civilised society, two contrasted and opposed views of human nature, human conduct, human life, and human prospects.

( On the one hand is the distinctively Christian view,

that man is the offspring of the eternal God, made originally in the Divine image, and consequently sharing in some measure the Divine Reason, and capable of apprehending and approving the Divine Righteousness. If this is so, then, although man *has* a body, which is the link that connects him with the realm of matter, man *is* a spirit. Related to the eternal order, man is endowed with a moral nature, and is called to a moral life. The conditions of his earthly existence, and the fact of his sinfulness, no doubt interfere with his perfect vision of God, and his perfect sympathy with Divine law. Yet he is susceptible of teaching both by Nature and by Revelation, and he is capable of being affected by those spiritual influences which are as real as physical forces. He can recognise moral authority ; he can decline the imperious summons of the body, and the more imperious summons of society ; he can consent to the demand of Conscience, he can obey the behest of Law, he can do the will of God.

Christianity regards man as a spiritual being, capable of knowing God, and of approving the law of Righteousness.

Those who take the spiritual view of human nature and morality differ, no doubt, among themselves. But all agree that man is spiritual, that the voice of Duty speaks from above, that Right is to be sought in what is higher and more authoritative than feeling,—whether the sensations of the body or the emotions of the soul.

Difference among Christians on speculative questions of Ethics does not interfere with their reverence in common for Right and Duty.

There is however another view of morality



The other theory regards man as a superior organism, with a wider range of function and of sensitiveness.

widely different from that now explained, and a view which has unhappily been adopted during the present century even by many whose sympathies are with the cause of virtue, so far as virtue subsists between man and man. The progress of physical science, and especially of physiology, the widespread acceptance of the modern theory of Development or Evolution, have concurred to prepare the way for a so-called scientific theory of morals in complete opposition to the rational and religious theory above set forth. The starting-point of this opposing theory of ethics is to be discerned in the very common belief that man is an organism, and nothing but an organism, that he is simply the most highly developed of the animals which inhabit this globe, whose highly organised brain and nervous system have taken on wider and finer functions than those discharged by the inferior creatures from which he is differentiated. Upon this theory mind is feeling,—more or less complicated. The theory in question does not pretend to do away with the mystery of Consciousness ; it maintains the perfect distinction between the physical nervous shock and its psychical symbol in consciousness. But it regards all that is mental as the outgrowth of what is bodily. According to the Philosophy of feeling, pleasure and pain are the accompaniment of proper function, and accordingly the guide-posts pointing to proper conduct. By do-

This physical theory of Ethics naturally regards pleasure and pain as the true criteria of conduct.

ing what is pleasurable and avoiding what is painful, men will thus secure their own well-being, and promote the development of the race, both physically and socially. There is, according to this doctrine, no other law and no other motive for human conduct than the pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain. As will be shown presently, there are introduced by ethical philosophers various considerations qualifying the crude *dictum*, that what gives pleasure is therefore right. Still it will not be denied that the advocates of physical ethics, whether Epicureans, Utilitarians, or Evolutionists, are of one mind as to the *criterion*, the law, the motive, the sanction, of human conduct, depending upon the experiences of pleasure and of pain alone.

The reader will now see clearly for what reasons we invite his attention to the doctrine of Utilitarianism. We know that this doctrine is held and propagated by sincere Theists, and even (it must be admitted) by some Christians. But we believe that it can be shown that its acceptance is inconsistent with Theism and with Christianity, and is antagonistic to that cause of independent and disinterested morality which those who profess Theism and Christianity should have at heart.

Hence the importance of examining and refuting its claims.

## I.

THE CENTRAL DOCTRINE AND THE DEFINITION OF  
UTILITARIANISM.

Utilitarian-  
ism is a  
variety of  
Hedonism.

WHAT is the chief and central doctrine of Utilitarianism,—the one characteristic by which it is distinguished from other theories of morals,—that by which it is defined and described? The answer to this question is plain and unambiguous: *that course of action is right which issues in the largest amount of pleasure, or the least amount of pain, to all sentient beings who are affected by the action.* It is evident that two propositions are included in this definition: viz., 1. Pleasure is the chief good, and Pain the chief evil; and 2. the Pleasure and Pain to be considered are not simply those of the agent, but of all concerned.

Hedonism  
being the  
doctrine  
that  
Pleasure is  
the standard  
and test of  
right action.

“Hedonism” is the term used to denote the doctrine that pleasure is the standard and criterion of moral good, of right action. There have been and are, Hedonists who think that whatever gives pleasure to the agent, *i.e.*, the most pleasure on the whole, is therefore the right thing for him to do. Such Hedonists are called *Egoistic*, because the beginning and end of morality, according to them, is the pleasure of the agent. The higher and nobler Hedonists, however, take a very different

view. As the proper aim of conduct, according to them, is the promotion of the happiness of the community generally, they are properly named, *Universalistic Hedonists*. Hedonists of this type, who aim at the general diffusion of pleasure, are commonly designated Utilitarians. Pleasure is still "the one thing needful," the one thing all-sufficient; but the pleasure sought is that which is diffused throughout society. This theory is thus far from being selfish: it is in its very essence benevolent.

With regard to the first of the two propositions involved in the definition of Utilitarianism, misunderstanding is scarcely possible. It affirms that Pleasure is the *summum bonum*, the best thing in the universe, that to seek pleasure and to shun pain is the sum and substance of morality. Other things may be desired, but they are all desirable for the sake of the pleasure they yield. But Pleasure is an ultimate, self-sufficient end, is desired and is desirable for its own sake, and not for the sake of anything else. There is no need to bring forward any reason why Pleasure should be thus sought. The reason is engraved deeply upon our own constitution; it is in the very nature of things that Pleasure should be the ultimate end and justification of action. This principle is held to be intuitively apprehended.

Utilitarians hold that the one only and proper end of human action is the promotion and wide diffusion of Pleasure.

It is easy to understand that Pleasure should be regarded by many as the highest good.

With regard to the second of these propositions, there is some opening for difference of opinion as

It is not very easy to see how wide is the range contemplated by those who profess Universalistic Hedonism.

to its exact meaning. For, whilst Utilitarianism is certain that an agent ought not to seek merely his own pleasure, it leaves it an open question how wide shall be the range within which the quantity of pleasure following upon any action is to be calculated. We are to act so as to give pleasure to others, and then we shall certainly act aright; but as to whom we are to please by our action,—with regard to this there may be room for discussion. Those immediately connected with us are too few, and offer a scope too limited. Yet to include all sentient creatures that are, or may be, in distant places and times, indirectly affected, seems, on the other hand, to give too wide a range.

The Utilitarian may consistently consent to suffer Pain for the sake of Pleasure only thus to be attained.

Although the Hedonist regards Pleasure as above all things to be desired, and Pain as above all things to be dreaded and avoided, it must not be supposed that he is unwilling in all circumstances to encounter pain, bodily and mental. Whether an Egoist or an Altruist, he is bound to brave suffering, when by doing so he can add to the total stock of pleasure. [The benevolent Utilitarian recognizes that the plan of the world is such that some must bear ills from which their nature shrinks, in order that others may experience relief and joy. To him Pleasure is so excellent, that in order to increase its sum, he is willing to submit to the often grievous conditions by which only the general happiness can be secured and increased.



What does Utilitarianism claim to be? Its pretensions are large and bold.

1. Its upholders assert that Utilitarianism is the *one true theory of Morals*. It is well known that for more than two thousand years various theories have been maintained for the scientific exposition and establishment of the morally good,—the right,—in human character and conduct. Apart from Revelation philosophers thought, speculated, and wrote, upon these themes. And even since Christianity has shed light of priceless, peerless value upon Morality, discussions have still prevailed, even amongst those who acknowledge the Divine origin and authority of our Religion, with regard to the foundations of right and of duty. Some have regarded Reason as the criterion of morality; some have sought the supreme test of Right in a “moral sense,” others have looked for the standard of duty to the Will of God, as declared in Nature, and as more fully revealed in Scripture. There are those who seek the authoritative law of conduct in the organization of man’s nature,—in the perfect exercise of human powers,—in the structure of Society, or in the law of the State,—or in that Universal Order which is recognizable in the creation. But the Hedonist seeks the solution of the vast question in man’s capacity for pleasure, and the Utilitarian in that capacity for pleasure as possessed both by the human race, and by all sentient beings.

Utilitarians claim that they have found the solution to the question which has agitated thinkers for centuries; that they have reached the Truth upon the highest of all human interests.

They claim to have laid a scientific basis for the legislation of all States.

2. Utilitarianism further offers itself as *the ultimate principle of legislation*. The advocates of the system rely for its general acceptance, in no slight measure, upon its supposed applicability to questions of political and legislative interest. They urge that no consideration is more potent with law-makers than the consideration of Utility. Is it not the aim of unselfish and public-spirited legislators to seek the increase of the pleasures and the diminution of the privations and miseries of the community? Statesmen and politicians have been accustomed to test measures proposed for their adoption by their agreement, or otherwise, with the formula: "Aim at the greatest happiness of the greatest number."

They claim to apply an intelligible and unflinching rule to the conduct of individuals.

3. The principle in question claims to be *the one all-sufficient practical rule of individual conduct*. We are told that the endeavour to apply other *criteria* will frequently involve us in perplexities and difficulties, and will lead to no definite and satisfactory result; but that nothing can be simpler than the inquiry, What course of action will yield most general pleasure? and that no moral law can be more plain and unquestionable than that which is yielded by translating the answer to that inquiry into the imperative mood. It is not denied that there are other more familiar and more "handy" rules of conduct, *e.g.*, What is customary? What is the law of the land? What is the dictate of

Religion? Nay, it is admitted that there is such a quality as Virtue, that it is right to do virtuous acts, that a man may properly ask concerning any proposed conduct, Is this according to Virtue? But as the Utilitarian considers that Virtue is good simply because its prevalence is a means to the increase of Pleasure,—which is the supreme end of conduct,—he does not look upon Virtue as conflicting with Utility, for the laws of Virtue are in his view only the subordinate rules framed for the purpose of promoting the pleasurable experiences of mankind.

They consider that they go below even Virtue in their foundation for Morality

## II.

### THE HISTORICAL GENESIS OF UTILITARIANISM.

[LIKE most systems of philosophy and morals, that now under consideration had its roots in Ancient Greece, where Aristippus and the Cyrenaics, and Epicurus and his school, advocated pleasure as the highest good. In modern times, Hobbes and Locke revived the doctrine of Hedonism, and Hume by his writings gave it a powerful philosophic impulse. But we will come direct to those names associated with our modern Utilitarianism, and with contemporary controversy.

The roots of all Hedonism are to be sought in the philosophies of Ancient Greece; though the growth sprung up afresh in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Utilitarianism, as a principle held and advocated by a powerful school of ethical and political philosophers, owes its origin to the writings of Jeremy

Jeremy Bentham the founder of Modern Utilitarianism.

Bentham. The first sentences of his work on *The Principles of Morals and Legislation* are so plain and outspoken that they may with advantage be quoted *verbatim* :—

Bentham's undisguised Hedonism.

“Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure*. It is for them alone to point out what we ought to do, as well as to determine what we shall do. On the one hand, the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think. . . . The *principle of utility* recognises this subjection, and assumes it for the foundation of that system, the object of which is to rear the fabric of felicity by the hands of reason and of law . . . . By the principle of utility is meant that principle which approves or disapproves of every action whatsoever, according to the tendency which it appears to have to augment or diminish the happiness of the party whose interest is in question . . . . An action then may be said to be conformable to the principle of utility . . . . when the tendency it has to augment the happiness of the community is greater than any it has to diminish it.”

He considers Pleasure and Pain not only as criteria of ends to be sought; but also as means to be employed by Society.

According to Bentham, pleasure and pain are not only of supreme importance as *ends* of human action, *i.e.*, to be sought and shunned respectively; they are equally important to Society, and particularly to the Law, as *means* by which those ends are to be secured. That is to say, the pleasure of the community is to be promoted by the infliction of suffering upon those individuals whose conduct tends to diminish the sum of the general pleasure. Although he expressly mentions physical, moral or popular, and religious sanctions, Bentham lays the greatest stress upon the *political* sanction, in-



asmuch as legislation is, in his view, the most important department of the science of human conduct.

In Bentham's view not only must conduct be judged by its tendency to promote pleasure or pain. Pleasure is a good, and the only good; pain an evil, and the only evil. But these experiences, actual or prospective, act also as *motives*. The only motives which can induce men to act are the hope of securing pleasure or avoiding pain. Thus Bentham is led into the paradox, that

Bentham regards the quest of Pleasure and the avoidance of Pain as the only motives to action.

“There is no such thing as any sort of motive that is in itself a bad one.”

Even the pleasure of malice, envy, and cruelty is good, and

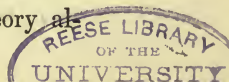
“While it lasts, and before any bad consequences arrive, it is as good as any other that is not more intense.” (!)

And although Bentham does not directly attack Religion, he resents every representation of the Deity which does not identify the Divine will with the intention to promote universal happiness, *i.e.*, the prevalence of pleasure. He complains that few of the votaries of religion are believers in the benevolence of God.

He identifies the Divine Will with the promotion of general enjoyment.

In our own time Utilitarianism has been recommended to public favour by the advocacy of Mr. J. S. Mill. The interest and charm of Mr. Mill's work on Utilitarianism do not lie merely in its style and its illustrations, but still more in the attempt to build a noble life upon a theory al-

Mr. J. S. Mill's teaching is an advance upon Bentham's.





Mill distinguishes among pleasures in the point of quality, and prefers higher to lower pleasures.

together insufficient to sustain it. His philosophy was a philosophy of pleasure, of utility; yet in two ways it differed from ordinary Epicureanism. [It had regard to the welfare of the whole species without exception; and may justly be designated Universalistic Hedonism. This was one characteristic; there was a second: viz., that it did not,—as has too often been done,—sink all distinctions in the quality of pleasures, reducing them to one common level. He differed from his master, Bentham, in laying stress upon the qualities characteristic of different kinds of pleasures, varying with their sources and occasions.

It must not, however, be lost sight of that Mr. Mill maintained Pleasure to be the one only standard of right.

“The creed,” he wrote, “which accepts as the foundation of morals, Utility or the greatest happiness principle, holds that actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness; wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness. By happiness is intended pleasure and the absence of pain; by unhappiness, pain and the privation of pleasure.” “Pleasure and the freedom from pain are the only things desirable as ends.”

Mr. Mill, like some others of the Epicurean school, assigns a higher place to

“the pleasures of the intellect, of the feelings and imagination, and of the moral sentiments,”

than to the pleasures of sensation. But his peculiarity is that he recognizes the former class as of superior excellence by reason of their intrinsic

To introduce  
a principle  
qualifying  
pleasure is  
inconsistent  
with  
thorough-  
going  
Hedonism.

nature, and not merely because of their greater permanence, safety, and uncostliness. The question of course occurs, How is it to be decided which pleasure of two is the higher? to which the answer is given, That one which is preferred by those who are equally acquainted with, and equally capable of appreciating and enjoying both. Mr. Mill makes the very obvious mistake of supposing that no one who knows a higher pleasure will choose a lower. In this he judged men by the standard of his own preferences. He was right in saying

“It is better to be Socrates dissatisfied, than a fool satisfied;”

but in saying this he virtually gave up the cardinal principle of Utilitarianism. If pleasure is the standard of good, a world of well-fed, mirthful fools is a better world than one peopled by discontented sages.

Bentham repudiated the term eudæmonism (from *εὐδαιμονία*, happiness) as less suited to describe his theory than hedonism (from *ἡδονή*, pleasure). The former seemed to him to point to a too elevated and refined theory of life. To Bentham, quantity of pleasure was the main thing: in an oft-quoted sentence he says:—

“Given equal amounts of pleasure, pushpin is as good as poetry.”

And this is sound hedonism, which Mill's doctrine of difference in quality of pleasure is not.

Sidgwick has well observed upon Mill's refined doctrine :—

“If of two pleasures the one that is ‘higher’ or more ‘refined’ is at the same time less pleasant, the Hedonist must consider it unreasonable to prefer it.”

Mr. Sidgwick renounces the dogma that Pleasure is the only thing desirable.

Mr. H. Sidgwick, in his *Methods of Ethics*, whilst dealing with the several systems of morals in a spirit of calm impartiality, still accepts the Utilitarian method as that which, in his opinion, has fewer difficulties than the others, and is, upon the whole, more satisfactory. It is, however, observable that he frankly gives up the dogma that Pleasure is the only desirable thing, whilst he holds fast to the belief that Pleasure is the ultimate standard of good.

— The latest exposition of Utilitarianism that demands notice is that presented by Mr. Herbert Spencer, in his *Data of Ethics*. In the preface to this work we are informed that the author's

“ultimate purpose, lying behind all proximate purposes, has been that of finding for the principles of right and wrong in conduct at large, a scientific basis.”

To the establishment of satisfactory principles of morals he deems all the preceding parts of his task as subsidiary.

Mr. Herbert Spencer distinguishes between absolute and relative ethics.

In accordance with his special theory, Mr. Spencer considers

“that Ethics has for its subject-matter that form which universal conduct assumes during the last stages of its evolution.”

As, however, these stages have not yet been generally reached, "absolute ethics" have to be foregone in favour of those "relative ethics" which are adapted to the present state of society.

Now conduct is regarded as good or bad according to its effect on "the complete living" of one's self, one's family, and society. And

"life is good or bad, according as it does, or does not, bring a surplus of agreeable feeling."<sup>1</sup> "The good is universally the pleasurable."<sup>2</sup>

Our ideas of the goodness and badness of forms of conduct

"really originate from our consciousness of the certainty or probability that they will produce pleasures or pains somewhere."<sup>3</sup>

Morality according to Mr. Spencer must be regarded in the light of Evolution.

Pleasure is the ultimate moral aim, and

"is as much a necessary form of moral intuition as space is a necessary form of intellectual intuition."<sup>4</sup>

But Mr. Spencer objects to the ordinary inductions of Utilitarians as crude and unscientific, and thinks them

"but preparatory to the Utilitarianism which deduces principles of conduct from the processes of life as carried on under established conditions of existence."

The consideration of ultimate causal connections will, he thinks, lead us to wider views of human conduct. When moral phenomena are treated as phenomena of evolution, it is seen that the conduct

<sup>1</sup> *Data of Ethics*, p. 28,      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* p. 30.      <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 32

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* p. 46.

is morally good which furthers the higher development of humanity,—that is to say—of human society. Singular results are reached by this method; *e.g.*, it is held that

“the performance of every function is, in a sense, a moral obligation.”<sup>1</sup>

Two things have to be considered: the connection between pleasure and normal development, and the influence of heredity. It is thus that Morality arises and is improved. On the whole, that conduct is good which is adapted to the maintenance and development of human society. The end is the prevalence of pleasure, the means are to be found in the connection between life-furthering conduct and pleasure. So that whilst in reading Mr. Spencer's book, the student is sometimes tempted to class the author with the “Perfectionists,” as seeking the supreme good in the highest development possible of human nature and society, he is constrained by Mr. Spencer himself to assign to him the designation of a *Rational* as distinguished from an *Empirical* Utilitarian. Consistency there is not in this philosophy: Mr. Spencer sets out with the most sweeping assertions of the supremacy of pleasure; he ends with a picture of ideal society, where altruism tempers egoism, and where most of life's evils are averted, and sets this before men as the aim to which effort should be directed. The

Mr. Spencer prefers Rational to Empirical Utilitarianism and deduces laws of conduct from the consideration of ideal society.

His view of the combination of altruism with egoism.

<sup>1</sup> *Data of Ethics*, p. 76.



author of the Evolutional Philosophy leaves us in a state of uncertainty as to whether pleasure or progress is the chief aim, the highest motive, of human conduct.

It is not difficult to account for the popular acceptance with which the system under consideration has met. There is much in Utilitarianism which is peculiarly suited to the temper of our age.

It is not surprising that Utilitarianism is popular.

1. Its apparent simplicity and comprehensibility are in its favour. Whilst it requires

It has a superficial simplicity.

application and reflectiveness to comprehend Aristotle's definition of well-being, Jouffroy's doctrine of the universal order, or Mr. Green's theory of perfection,—every one is persuaded that, as pleasure is so familiar a fact of experience, he is able to apply such a test as the measure in which human actions promote men's enjoyments or miseries. 2. This system falls in with what may be called the benevolently sentimental tendencies of the times. If the ancients erred in laying almost exclusive stress upon the sterner virtues, it must be admitted that in our times the softer excellences of character are put too prominently forward. Sensitiveness to suffering, especially to the suffering of others, is doubtless a virtue; but there are many signs that this is carried to an unwarrantable extreme. There are worse things in the world even than pain and weakness. But the pseudo-humanitarianism so prevalent in a

It displays sensitiveness to suffering.

It has  
points of  
agreement  
with the  
precepts of  
Christianity.

somewhat luxurious and effeminate state of society, is apt to look upon suffering as the one thing above all to be avoided, and a diffusion of general enjoyment as the one thing to be sought. And with this temper it is obvious that Utilitarianism exactly harmonizes. 3. There is a superficial compatibility with Christianity, which recommends the system under consideration to many who would shrink from an obviously un-Christian doctrine. Mr. Mill has taken advantage of this fact. He remarks :

“In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth, we read the complete spirit of the ethics of Utility. To do as we would be done by, and to love our neighbour as ourself, constitutes the ideal perfection of Utilitarian morality.”

It has  
convenience  
as applied to  
legislation.

The real connection between this system and our religion will be considered presently ; we here simply point out an apparent and superficial correspondence which has assisted Utilitarianism into public favour. 4. And yet again, it should be noticed that there is so much in “the greatest happiness principle” which agrees with the theory and practice of our legislators, that in the view of many minds Utilitarianism, having entered by the open gate of Law, has taken full possession of the very citadel of Morality.

## III.

AGAINST the system of Morals now sketched, we first contend that—

THE RADICAL DOCTRINE OF UTILITARIANISM, VIZ.,  
THAT PLEASURE IS THE “SUMMUM BONUM,”—  
IS ERRONEOUS.

It is an error to regard Pleasure as the highest good.

1. *Pleasure is not the natural, universal, and supreme end of the actions of a moral being.* Pleasure and Pain are facts in human experience of great interest and significance. They are accompaniments of function, normal and healthy, or abnormal and unhealthy. But they are not, ordinarily, ends to be sought. It is not pleasure which is desired, but the exercise of some power, the satisfaction of some want. Pleasure is an inducement to eat; but hunger craves food, not the gratification of the palate. Pleasure is an inducement to exercise, but the impulse is towards the employment of the muscular powers, not towards the ensuing pleasure.

A moral being should not aim at pleasure as the end of life.

Mr. Sidgwick, a powerful reasoner, himself inclining to Utilitarianism, has attacked the doctrine that men are ever aiming at pleasure as the end of their actions. He contends that another impulse,—the love of virtue for its own sake,—comes into conflict with the desire for pleasure.<sup>1</sup>

To make pleasure,—even refined and religious

<sup>1</sup> *Methods of Ethics*, p. 41.

pleasure,—the end of all our aims, seems very unworthy of such a being as man. There is something mean and ignoble, something degrading and to be ashamed of, in such a principle of action, as the supreme principle applying to all the many departments of human life. It is true that Utilitarians do not require that we should always consciously set this aim before us, that we should always consciously pursue it. But they do require that, when we reflect and analyse, we should recognize this as the substantial element in moral excellence, as the all-including and all-satisfying end of life. Now, that which is ultimate and elemental should surely be something upon which we can reflect with satisfaction, as meeting our most lofty aspirations, and fulfilling our noblest ideals. Can as much be asserted for pleasure,—of whatever grade?

There is no satisfaction in a life which aims at pleasure as the chief good.

Utilitarianism debases the noblest virtues of which rational and voluntary beings are capable, to a position in which they are subordinate and subservient to pleasure. If asked, Why should men be just towards their fellow-creatures? Why should they cultivate and practise purity of life and of heart? Why should they revere and confide in a God of faithfulness and love? the answer which the Utilitarian gives is this: Because justice, purity, and piety, are productive of personal and of general pleasure, and because the practice of these virtues will involve less suffering than their

Can we cultivate justice, purity, and piety, for the sake of the enjoyment they may yield?

neglect or repudiation ! An answer this which it must need great prepossession in favour of his own theory, and great indifference to the realities of the case, for a thinker to accept with acquiescence and satisfaction.

Yet the Utilitarian does not hesitate to avow that what we call sin would not be sin, or at all events what we call crime would not be crime, were it not productive of suffering.

The lengths to which a consistent Utilitarian must go.

“ If it can be shown by observation,” writes Professor Huxley, “ or experiment, that theft, murder, and adultery do not tend to diminish the happiness of society, then, in the absence of any but natural knowledge, they are not social immoralities.”<sup>1</sup>

This is a doctrine which confuses an accident with the essence of morality.

2. *If Pleasure is not the proper end of individual life, it cannot be that of the life of society.* There are many who would be ashamed to avow that their own pleasure is the one aim they seek by all their actions,—that personal enjoyment is the ultimate object of existence. Yet they think it a praiseworthy principle to seek nothing higher than the comfort and ease, the pleasure and enjoyment of their fellow-creatures. But reflection must convince us that an end, which is not satisfactory upon a small scale, cannot lose its unsatisfactory character when the scale is enlarged. If knowledge is good for the community, it is good for the

Pleasure being unsuitable as the end of an individual, is also unsuitable when sought over a wider range.

<sup>1</sup> *Nineteenth Century.* No. 3. May, 1877.



individual. The volume makes no difference in morality. Pleasure is *a* good both for one and for many; but as it is not *the* supreme good for one, it is not the supreme good for the nation or the race.

As far as we can trace the Divine Government, we do not find that Pleasure is its supreme end.

3. *Pleasure cannot be deemed the highest end contemplated by the government of God.* All who believe in a Divine Ruler and Lord, who is the Eternal Reason, must believe that there is *intention* in the Universe. To decide what the ultimate aim of all things really is, may be beyond our limited powers. Still, facts are accessible to us; we daily make our observations upon the course of Providence, and we draw our inferences. If Pleasure were the highest good, we should surely see in the world some evidences that this is the case. The Creator designs that Pleasure should be largely diffused among men; still Pain is an unquestionable fact, and its existence presents formidable obstacles in the way of believing what a religious Utilitarian must feel it a necessity to believe, viz., that God desires for His creatures as their highest good the largest possible amount of enjoyment. Indeed, Mr. J. S. Mill was so impressed by the magnitude of human suffering that he deemed it necessary, in order to retain faith in the benevolence of God, to renounce belief in His omnipotence.

It is apparent to the thoughtful observer that the end contemplated by the Author of all being is a

far higher end than conscious enjoyment. God desires that His intelligent creatures should be conformed to His own holy character; "man's chief end is to glorify God;" and to this all else, even religious pleasures, must be subordinated; albeit the highest kind and degree of pleasure will be experienced by all who fulfil the chief end of their existence. They will "enjoy Him for ever." Enjoyment of the highest kind comes to the man who truly glorifies God.

God's aim is holiness, and to this happiness is subordinated; man therefore should seek to judge as his Creator and Ruler judges.

#### IV.

#### THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF APPLYING THE UTILITARIAN RULE OR TEST.

At the very outset we ask, *What pleasures are to be calculated?* Are we to include in our reckoning the pleasures of intellectual exercise, of æsthetic appreciation,—which are enjoyed by comparatively few? On what ground can we exclude the pleasure of gambling, which is evidently to many persons one of the most intense of delights; for otherwise they would not sacrifice for its sake—reputation, wealth, domestic happiness, and other goods. On what ground can we exclude the pleasure of witnessing a bull-fight in Spain, or a pugilistic encounter in England? To multitudes, such spectacles afford the keenest enjoyment. On what ground are we to exclude the pleasures of malice, felt by many

The Utilitarian test is one which cannot be applied.

We cannot decide what pleasures to reckon.

✓

who delight in the failures, the losses, the sufferings of their fellow-men?

We are at a loss whose pleasures to consider.

*Whose pleasures are to be taken into account?* Are we to regard the happiness of our family, our social circle? or are we to take a more extended view, and include our fellow-countrymen, those of our own race, or even all mankind, *i.e.*, so far as they may be supposed to be slightly and remotely affected by our actions? Are we to think of the present generation only, or of our successors in distant ages? Shall we deny ourselves, with the hope of promoting the welfare of generations that may never come into existence? There are other sentient beings upon the earth besides men: shall human happiness be sacrificed in order that multitudes of the inferior animals may live, and enjoy life's pleasures?

It is unjust to regard man's pleasures irrespective of their moral character.

*Are the pleasures of men to be regarded without reference to their character?* The rule proposed is:

"Every person to count for one; no person for more than one."

If this is in any sense benevolence, it is certainly injustice. The rule seems to imply that the pleasures of the selfish, the vicious, the criminal, the idle, the injurious, are to be as much a matter of concern to us as those of the virtuous, the self-denying, the noble! Can this be what the Utilitarian intends? Or are we to suspend or modify the principle in certain obviously difficult cases?

The unreasonableness of Bentham's doctrine, taken by itself, has been well shown by Mr. Herbert Spencer, who concludes thus:—

“If the distribution is not to be indiscriminate, then the formula disappears. The something distributed must be apportioned otherwise than by equal division.”<sup>1</sup>

*How are we to estimate the pleasures of people in different stages of moral development?* Men's natural constitution differs in different cases: to one man pain is so repulsive that he will deem no pleasure worth acquiring which costs suffering; to another pleasure is so alluring that he will readily brave pain in its pursuit. Further, what is joy to one man is tedium to another. We cannot attribute capacity for intellectual pleasures to savages, or even to the lower types to be met with in civilized communities. Is that conduct to be commended which contributes to the enjoyment of the multitude, or that which favours the happiness of the cultivated few?

What gives great pleasure to one person gives no pleasure to another.

*How are pleasures to be weighed against pleasures, and how are pleasures and pains to be compared?* Many rules have been formulated, most of them expansions of the “Canons of Epicurus.” All these rules presume that these experiences can be dealt with as lines which can be measured, or as solids which can be weighed. That pleasure is said to be preferable which involves least pain, etc. But however well these rules look upon paper,

Pleasure and Pain are not measurable.

<sup>1</sup> *Data of Ethics*, p. 222.

their uselessness is apparent when we attempt to put them in practice.

The calculus not applicable to experiences so varying with different individuals.

The operations of weighing one pleasure against another, and any pleasure against any pain, are operations not simply difficult but impossible. Bentham tells us that we need a "moral Arithmetic" for the purpose, and Sidgwick terms the process the "Utilitarian calculus." But as there is no acknowledged unit of either pain or pleasure, there is absolutely no possibility of performing the balancing operation. For a comparison of the kind required will yield quite different results according to the temperament, the character, the circumstances of the persons undertaking it. Pleasure and pain are experiences too decidedly subjective to admit of such treatment as that proposed. And if the process were possible upon the understanding that *quantity* of feeling only is to be considered, it becomes impossible when *qualities* of experience are discriminated from one another.

The question must arise, At what cost of pain is it lawful to purchase pleasure?

*How far is it justifiable to inflict pain, if there is a prospect that an excess of pleasure may ensue?* The gladiatorial shows practised in ancient Rome yielded intense enjoyment to thousands of all ranks in life. And this enjoyment was purchased by the pain and death of a few wild beasts, and of a few men who were presumably of a more or less brutalized nature. If the pleasure preponderated over the pain, was the exhibition right?



*It is often impossible so to calculate the consequences of actions, as to foretell what pleasures and what pains will follow. If the morality of actions depends upon such a calculation, great uncertainty cannot but attach to their moral quality; and the man who is anxious to do right must always be liable to make the discovery that he has been doing wrong.*

*Who shall be entrusted with the responsible offices of estimating and foretelling consequences, and so of deciding what conduct is virtuous and praiseworthy, and what is not? Shall every man do what is "right in his own eyes"? Then, one person will praise as virtuous acts which another will condemn as wrong. Shall the general sentiment, the public opinion, be accepted? Then the standard must vary with successive generations, and with differing communities. Shall a congress of philosophers be entrusted with the decision? Then we must wait for the promulgation of their decrees!*

*There is an obvious ambiguity in the expression, "The greatest happiness of the greatest number." One course of action may be such as to involve an equal distribution of pleasure amongst many; another course of action may be productive of great pleasure to the vast majority, and yet may be the means of rendering a few intensely wretched: which course should be adopted in order to fulfil the rule laid down in the above words of Bentham?*

The prediction of the consequences of actions is so difficult and uncertain that a rule involving such prediction should if possible be avoided.

The ambiguity of the well-worn phrase "greatest happiness of the greatest number."

Are we to understand by it (1) the highest sum total of pleasure, all sentient beings considered; or (2) the highest average of pleasure diffused amongst those sentient beings? If the first interpretation be adopted, then it is good to inflict misery upon a few for the sake of the enjoyment of the many. If the second interpretation, then it is necessary to be very careful to avoid any actions which may lower the measure of happiness experienced by any. We are thus involved by the doctrine in a maze of casuistry.

## V.

### UTILITARIANISM MISAPPREHENDS THE RELATIONS BETWEEN VIRTUE AND PLEASURE.

Its un-  
selfishness  
and  
benevolence  
are a good  
feature in  
Utilitarian-  
ism.

THE best feature in the system known as Utilitarianism, or Universalistic Hedonism, is its hostility to selfishness, a feature borrowed from the religion of the Lord Jesus Christ. But even this cannot make amends for its exaltation of Pleasure to the highest rank in the moral standard and in the moral motive. In fact, there is a discrepancy between the two leading principles of the Utilitarian theory which has sometimes escaped observation.

*There is no logical pathway from pure Hedonism to what is called Utilitarianism.* Hedonism means nothing if it does not mean that pleasure, personal happiness, is the one supreme end of life.

It is often and justly said that if we seek the good of others in order that we may please ourselves, we are not acting benevolently, but selfishly,—as egoistic hedonists. If, on the other hand, we make the happiness of others our law, we desert Hedonism altogether,—surrendering pleasure, and adopting quite another principle of morals.

As pleasure is something personal, to make pleasure our aim is not consistent with universal benevolence.

*Is it a fact that all virtuous action tends to promote immediate happiness*, if by happiness we are to understand pleasure or the absence of pain? The Utilitarians maintain that there is no excellence, no moral merit, in virtue except in so far as virtue furthers happiness. Now so far as observation goes,—and the Utilitarian holds experience to be the only source of knowledge,—it cannot be shown that all conduct which is admittedly virtuous does, as a matter of fact, increase the stock of pleasure enjoyed by mankind in this state of being. We see suffering result from right actions; yet sometimes—strain our eyes as we will—we can discern no compensating happiness ensuing. Only faith in goodness, only a conviction in a Divine Ruler of righteousness, can sustain us in the persuasion that such disinterestedly virtuous conduct should be approved and imitated. There have been cases in which Christians have endured torture and martyrdom from Pagans, or Protestants from Papists. Rather than abjure Christ, such holy sufferers have endured and even died. No

As far as observation goes, Virtue and Pleasure are not always conjoined in this life.

On  
Utilitarian  
principles  
how can the  
self-sacrifice  
of the mar-  
tyr and the  
patriot be  
justified?

doubt there have been instances in which martyrs have experienced an inward consolation, and even a joy of spirit approaching rapture. But generally speaking, those who have suffered death for the truth have endured pain amounting to anguish. Is their conduct to be admired and commended? If so, Why? Their sufferings were fearful, and they sank under them. If the spectators of these sufferings experienced no pain of sympathy,—as they probably did, thus increasing the sum of misery,—we can scarcely set the malevolent enjoyment of a fiendish or brutal inquisitor over against the martyr's anguish. But were there compensating advantages in remote and general happiness? Alas! in many cases, so far as earth is concerned, the purpose of the persecutor was fulfilled; independence of thought and speech was crushed, and bigotry triumphed!

Dr. Bain's  
teaching,—  
that social  
authority  
sanctioning  
action pro-  
ductive of  
happiness  
constitutes  
rightness—  
is rather  
Hobbism  
than Utili-  
tarianism.

If all kinds of pleasure-yielding actions cannot fairly be termed morally good, where shall we look for the distinguishing feature which confers this quality? Dr. Bain seeks it in the civic or social authority by which certain courses of conduct are prescribed. "Utility made compulsory" is moral goodness or rightness. The Government enjoins certain actions which are for the public good, *i.e.*, which are productive of general pleasure. Conscience is the mirror of social authority, and confirms inwardly the injunction imposed from

without. Fear of punishment is the essence of moral obligation. This doctrine is scarcely Utilitarianism, high as is the value it sets upon Utility. It seems to make the State or Society the arbiter of right and wrong, and gives us no direction when our personal view of expediency points one way, and the strong hand of the law points the other.

*The system now under discussion certainly bases Morality far too much upon the passive nature of man, upon his sentiency, and capacity for enjoyment.* It has been said by Professor Grote, in technical language, that we have to consider in Ethics, not only the *summum bonum*, which corresponds to the want of human nature,—the *acquirendum*; but also the *summum jus*, the right, which corresponds to human activity,—the *faciendum*. He means to insist upon the great truth that a good man will be actuated in his conduct, not so much by considering what he may attain in the way of enjoyment, as by considering in what way he may exercise his powers and fulfil his actual duties. Not what affords most pleasure, but what calls out the powers of our nature in healthy and appropriate exercise, is the true moral ideal, at which ethical endeavour must always aim, and short of which ethical endeavour cannot do other than fail.

Utilitarianism bases morality too much upon man's capacities, not enough upon his faculties.

The ethical aim is right action, not agreeable feeling.

slippery

It is sometimes asserted that Utility is an ob-



Utility, when analysed, appears to be a very decidedly subjective standard of conduct.

jective standard of morality, one that can accordingly be represented to the mind, and applied without difficulty or ambiguity. Now, this is a very misleading view of the facts. Of all our experiences none are more purely subjective than pleasure and pain. Law, on the contrary, is an objective standard, one independent of our feelings, and apprehended by our intelligence. In pleasure and pain there is the utmost possible indefiniteness. What is very painful to one person is but slightly so to another, and that which scarcely yields a thrill of enjoyment to a man of a stolid constitution may bring ecstasy to a more susceptible and sensitive temperament. And the same individual is at different times sensitive to feeling in very varying degrees.

Virtue is not always rewarded upon earth with recompense of enjoyment.

*It is certain that in this earthly life pleasures and pains are not apportioned in consonance with the character and deserts of men.* Yet all mankind are undergoing moral discipline, culture, probation. The vicious are sometimes punished "in the flesh" for their vices, when those vices are violations of physical laws. The virtuous are sometimes permitted to suffer even for their virtues, when those virtues lead to conduct out of harmony with physical surroundings. We recognize intention purpose, in this arrangement; but only (so to speak) in the very germ or bud. There is no completeness in the system; there are indications

but often little more than indications of the aims of a Holy and Beneficent Governor.

Reflecting minds have, in all ages, been led by these considerations to cherish the expectation of a life to come, and of future rewards and punishments. There is a moral perception which seems to require that the wrongs of time should be redressed in Eternity, that persecuted and calumniated goodness should be approved and recompensed, that prosperous wickedness should be overtaken by retribution, that the incomplete discipline should be continued, that the results of probation should be made manifest, that the unfinished work of God should be brought to a conclusion harmonious with the Divine attributes, and that the just government of the Almighty Ruler should be vindicated in the experience of all mankind, and in the presence of a satisfied and approving Universe.

The probability, upon grounds of Reason, of a future life of retribution.

## VI.

### UTILITARIANISM GIVES NO EXPLANATION OF THE MORAL IMPERATIVE.

It is a crucial test to which we put the Utilitarian system when we ask, How does that system, explain the moral imperative? Is it compatible with the existence, the sacredness of duty? The doctrine which we are criticizing, is, that moral

Moral obligation is a fact for which a system of Moral Philosophy is bound to account.

good and evil are merely kinds of pleasure and pain. Now, can it be maintained that we are bound to do the thing which causes pleasure as we are bound to do "the thing that right is?" that we are bound to refrain from all that causes suffering to ourselves or others, as we are bound to shun wrong-doing and sin? If we do feel ourselves morally obliged to do what involves pain to ourselves or others, is our justification, our defence, simply this,—that we expect present suffering to produce a larger measure of future joy?

Utilitarianism nowhere more conspicuously fails than in attempting to deal with duty. If there is one factor in human nature more interesting and admirable than another, it is our subjection to moral obligation. The word "ought" is indeed often used very loosely and inaccurately, but it has a proper meaning, from which the secondary and figurative uses of it are derived. It is quite true that we say, I bought my watch from a good maker, and gave a large price for it; it *ought* to keep good time; or, My horse *ought* to do the distance in an hour; or, My sight being good, I *ought* to see a vessel on the horizon as I look out to sea. But these are simply adaptations of language, recognizing the dependence of certain movements or feelings upon the corresponding function. The real and true meaning of "ought" only comes out where voluntary conduct is in

"Ought" is a word often loosely and figuratively applied.

question, where an alternative between different courses of action opens up, and where the person who is called upon to act is conscious of the power of choosing one of these courses in preference to others. It is possible for a moral agent to speak truthfully or deceitfully, to deal honestly with his neighbour or to defraud him, to act like a churl or with generosity, to read the Scriptures or a foul French novel, to pray or to curse men and blaspheme God. But in every such case of moral alternative, one mode of action is morally imperative as compared with the other. Whenever we can say, This action is right, we can also say, This action it is the duty of a free and moral agent to perform.

Its real meaning is connected with voluntary choice in human conduct.

Utilitarians cannot, however, "regard human conduct in this light. Such independent obligation is most distasteful to Bentham, who in his *Deontology* says:—

"It is in fact very idle to talk about duties." "The talisman of arrogance, indolence, and ignorance, is to be found in a single word, an authoritative imposture . . . It is the word 'ought,' or 'ought not,' as circumstances may be . . . If the use of the word be admissible at all, it 'ought' to be banished from the vocabulary of morals."

Moral obligation is usually denied or explained away by Utilitarians.

A popular writer of our day, Professor Bain, speaking of Morality, Duty, Obligation, or Right, says:—

"I consider that the proper meaning or import of these terms refers to the class of actions enforced by the sanction of punishment."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Emotions and the Will*, chap. xv. p. 264.

A man's duty is, then, that for neglecting which he would be punished, either by actual suffering inflicted by law, or by public censure and social penalty. According to this moralist, Conscience is "that portion of our constitution which is moulded upon external authority as its type." <sup>1</sup>

Dr. Bain  
resolves the  
sense of  
Duty into  
fear of  
punishment.

If this be the case, then society, by means of government or otherwise, inflicts punishment upon such actions as interfere with the pleasures or increase the pains of men; and then association being established in the mind between punishable actions and punishment, men come to dread and avoid such actions. Duty and Conscience thus derive all their meaning from the social usage of punishment. Morality is the offspring, at all events in the first instance, of fear. The Conscience is a miniature police court within the breast, keeping order by threats of apprehension and consequent "pains and penalties." Upon this scheme of morals, duty has regard only to wrong-doing. It is no man's duty to do more than avoid such conduct as is punishable; it is meritorious to be benevolent, but it is not morally obligatory.

Mr. J. S.  
Mill regards  
Duty as the  
creature of  
Education.

Mr. J. S. Mill is no more successful in accounting upon Utilitarian principles for the great fact of moral obligation. He thinks that there is "an internal sanction of duty," but that this exists only



for those whose moral feelings have been trained to take pleasure in whatever promotes the general good. It is his hope that a regard for the happiness of others may by careful education acquire the force of a religion. For those persons in whose mind no such association has been established, Mr. Mill does not seem to have any special sanction provided.

Thus we come back to the question :—

How does the contemplation and calculation of pleasure and pain bring into the mind the conception corresponding to the word “ought”? Duty, moral obligation, is an idea which cannot be resolved into the dread of punishment. When a man says, “This I ought to do, however I may be regarded or treated in consequence by my fellow-men;” he is saying something quite different from “This it is for my interest to do; if I neglect to do it; I shall be punished by the powers that be.” The two principles of action must not, and cannot, be confounded. Is there no difference between the principle which actuates a craven slave, and that by which the hero or the saint is inspired to suffer and to do?

The fact is, that, in pleasure and in pain, there is nothing morally authoritative. They are both great realities of experience, which no man can overlook in making and in carrying out his plans in life. But we do not feel that when these

The failure of the attempts made by Utilitarians to account for Moral Obligation.

Pleasure and Pain are lacking in moral authority.

elements alone are present, there is of necessity the element of moral obligation. I ought to do what a just authority commands; but I cannot say, I ought to do what will deliver me from suffering, what will bring me delight. It is something quite different from interest, whether of one's self or of others, which accounts for the sacred imperative of duty.

Duty and  
Conscience  
are sacred.

Yet Duty and Conscience are realities, and among the most precious realities of human existence. In recent times their importance has been effectively exhibited by Kant, who has rendered no greater service to the cause of sound and religious philosophy than by his repudiation of all merely empirical explanation of our moral nature, his exaltation of the proper dignity of the moral agent, his insistence upon the sacredness of the moral law, the so-called "categorical imperative." A system like Utilitarianism has, at this point, to encounter all that is most vigorous and ennobling in contemporary philosophy, both on the Continent and in Britain.

They are  
upheld as  
sacred by  
the greatest  
Moralists.

## VII.

### CHRISTIAN UTILITARIANISM.

SOME sincerely religious readers may object to the foregoing criticism that it is unfair to represent Utilitarianism and Christianity as opposed to

each other. They may contend for the possibility of combining the two,—the philosophy of the Universal Hedonists and the religion of the New Testament. They may remind us that the Creator does really desire the happiness of His creatures, and especially of those rational beings whom He has created with capacities for pleasure so vast and varied. They may add that the Scriptures frequently depict the happiness attending a pious life as an inducement to embrace the true religion, and they may urge that the Saviour Himself invites the sinful and unhappy to His own gracious person, with the assurance that His yoke is easy and His burden light, and that He recommends His service by the glorious prospect of participation in the victorious Captain's blissful throne.

There is a Christian Utilitarianism, which represents Religion as aiming at happiness chiefly, and re'ying on the hope of happiness as its motive power.

There is prevalent, among many professed Christians, a view of the Divine Government which may be called "Christian Utilitarianism." It is not uncommon for religious persons to write and to speak as though the one great end sought by the Divine Ruler were the enjoyment of His creatures. It is urged that benevolence is one of the most glorious attributes of the Divine nature, that, being infinitely benevolent, God must desire to see all His creatures happy, that revealed religion has the happiness of men for its one great end, and that, sooner or later, pain and

Christian Utilitarianism represents it as God's chief aim to render man happy, and as man's chief aim to obtain the happiness God promises to the obedient.

sorrow must be banished from the universe, and the reign of perfect, unbroken, and eternal happiness must be established. Paley has even defined Virtue, as "the doing good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God, and *for the sake of everlasting happiness.*" He teaches that the will of God is indeed the rule, but that everlasting happiness is the motive to virtuous conduct.

Such a doctrine as this is no doubt very different from the doctrine which leaves out of sight the existence and the government of a divine Sovereign. But it is a doctrine very much at variance with the stern facts of existence, and with the character of the Christian Revelation. Whatever we may think of God's benevolence, the existence of sin and the prevalence of a vast amount of wretchedness are undeniable. There is every reason to believe that the Ruler of all is less concerned for the enjoyment than for the moral improvement of His intelligent creatures. The Christian religion first of all deals with sin, and deals with unhappiness only in subordination to the higher problem of human life. The redemption of the Lord Jesus Christ is a redemption from the bondage and the curse of sin. The work of the Holy Spirit is a work of regeneration and of sanctification. That those who embrace the Gospel, who live a life of fellowship with God as His reconciled and obedient children, are

But God is more concerned for men's goodness than for their enjoyment.

introduced into a state of progressive happiness, is indeed true; and this is an arrangement of God's government, for which we cannot be sufficiently grateful. The promise is graciously given: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you." Still, the enjoyment which the Christian now finds in the reception of the truth, and in communion with God, varies to some extent with temperament and with circumstances, whilst this variety does not affect the individual's real relationship to his God and Saviour. Happiness is a merciful and precious addition to the privileges of the Christian; it is not the essence of his religious experience, nor is it the highest gift of God. Even when we think of the future state, of the abode and the occupations of the glorified, is it not the case that the first and most welcome thoughts of heaven are of the perfect conformity there attained to the holy will of our Father, and the freedom and devotion with which God's servants shall there serve Him day and night in His temple? The fellowship with Christ shall be perfect, and the society of the blessed shall be intimate. All this will be productive of complete, incomparable happiness. But it is not happiness that will make heaven; it is heaven that will make happiness.

Christianity  
promises  
first and  
chiefly  
spiritual  
blessings.

True  
Religion  
depicts  
happiness  
as some-  
thing added  
to the chief  
good.



## VIII.

THE ALTERNATIVE, IF UTILITARIANISM BE  
REJECTED.

Putting  
aside  
Utili-  
tarianism,  
is there no  
better and  
truer stan-  
dard of  
Right and  
Duty?

BUT if the Utilitarian standard of morality be rejected, what shall be accepted in its place? It is sometimes said that Utilitarians put forward a *criterion* of Right and Duty, at all events intelligible, but that alternative *criteria* are vague and indefinable. Every one, we are told, can understand what happiness is, and those who, by cultivation, are able to enjoy pleasures of a higher order, can classify the pleasurable experiences of which human nature is susceptible, and so can construct an intelligible rule of human conduct. But if this theory of duty be rejected, we are challenged to say what shall be substituted for it. The demand is reasonable.

How to  
discover  
rectitude.

In our judgment the standard of right is discoverable, and may be apprehended with growing completeness by those who will regard three important considerations.

Our own  
mental  
and moral  
constitution.

1. To understand what is the true and authoritative principle of morality, it is necessary to examine our own constitution, the powers with which we are endowed, the development of which those powers are by exercise capable, and the perfection of our

nature which we may thus attain. Professor Calderwood has well said:—

“If a general conception can be formed of the end or final object of our being, it must be by reference to the higher or governing powers of our nature ; and as these are intellectual or rational, the end of our being is not pleasure, but the full and harmonious use of all our powers for the accomplishment of their own natural ends.”<sup>1</sup>

The same truth has been thus expressed by a philosophical writer of a different school from Professor Calderwood, the late Professor T. H. Green, of Oxford. He says:

“The real value of the virtue rises with the more full and clear conception of the end to which it is directed :—as a character, not a good fortune ; as a fulfilment of human capabilities from within, not an accession of good things from without ; as a function, not a possession.”<sup>2</sup>

And again:—

“Our theory has been that the development of morality is founded on the action in man of an idea of true or absolute good, consisting in the full realization of the capabilities of the human soul.”<sup>3</sup>

2. It is not a complete view of the foundation of ethics to confine our attention to the development of our own powers. We are but units in a vast whole, members of a glorious and mystic body. In the universe of being, every conscious individual has his allotted place, and his allotted function. Corresponding to the capacities and faculties within

The vast  
and moral  
Order with  
which we  
are related.

<sup>1</sup> *Handbook of Moral Philosophy*, p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> *Prolegomena to Ethics*, p. 265.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 303.

are the relations with which we are encompassed, the beings in federal relation with ourselves. There is a moral *cosmos*, a universal order, from which we cannot escape, and in which we may bear a serviceable and not ignoble part.

The Divine Lawgiver and Sovereign, whose attribute is Righteousness.

3. It is often and justly said that a law implies a law-giver. The Utilitarian theory is not indeed inconsistent with Theism, but it is a theory which may consistently be held, and is held, by those who do not believe in God. It is the favourite theory of those who regard evolution as the great formative principle of the universe, who consider intelligence to be a development from sensation, and moral distinctions and moral faculties to be a further development from the same elements, along the same line. It is especially the theory of those to whom susceptibility to pleasure and pain is sufficient to account for all that moral life which constitutes the chief prerogative of humanity. As it represents obligation as persistent instinct or impulse, and responsibility as liability to punishment by human governors, or at all events by human society, this theory is naturally acceptable to those who maintain that what they call "the hypothesis of God" is unnecessary and superfluous.

Man's aspirations towards participation in God's character:

That man admires and aspires after moral excellence which has never been in his experience realized, may be taken as a suggestion of a nature purer, nobler than his own, either nearer to abso-

lute perfection, or actually possessing and manifesting it. His moral nature is, on the one hand, so imperfect, and yet on the other hand has so inextinguishable a yearning for flawless and awful goodness, that it has ever been deemed the truest and mightiest witness to the Deity. Very beautifully has Professor Grote expressed this commonplace of the higher philosophy in these words :—

And sub-  
jection to  
God's will.

“If we think of that which should be, and consider at the same time that the mind and the will of God are according to this, we are in point of fact trying to imagine what it is that He thinks and wills. And I do not know that we can have a better notion of morality than as the imagination on our part of the thought and will of a better and superior Being.”<sup>1</sup>

If it is difficult to give any reasonable or even plausible account of *the material universe* apart from the existence and will of a Divine Creator and Lord, whose reason and whose purpose are manifest in the marvellous arrangements and harmony of this majestic cosmos; it is in our apprehension utterly impossible, apart from the same great fact, to give any explanation of the far more wonderful and interesting *realm of moral life* into which every human being is introduced. Our Reason presumes a Divine Mind, in which all things are perfectly comprehended, which we apprehend in their incompleteness. Our freedom presumes a peculiar relation to the Eternal Will, and involves certain and inevitable responsibility to the Omniscient Judge.

The ne-  
cessity of a  
Creator of  
the physical  
universe,  
and of a  
Ruler of the  
moral  
universe.

<sup>1</sup> Professor Grote on *Utilitarianism*.

The Divine  
Will is a  
reality.

Those who identify the standard of righteousness with the Divine Will are sometimes met with the objection that such an identification tends to make morality altogether arbitrary. If what God wills is the right, then (it is urged) if God were to will in the contrary direction, what we hold to be right would become wrong, and what we hold to be wrong would become right. How can that be an independent standard of morality which is dependent upon the will even of God ?

The Divine  
will is not  
to be re-  
garded apart  
from the  
Divine  
Reason.

The answer to these difficulties is to be found in the consideration that the Divine Will (if we may use language so human) is according to the Divine Reason. The Will is simply the imperative, so to speak, corresponding with the Reason, which is indicative. Man's will is often capricious, is often in contradiction to his highest conceptions and convictions, is often according to his evil passions or foolish fancies, and not according to his reason. With the all-perfect Deity this is not the case. Whilst the attributes of Wisdom, Justice, and Benevolence prescribe the law of morality, the Will of God publishes, sanctions, and enforces it. The revelation of the law in the human conscience and in the inspired volume is a revelation of the Nature and Attributes of God, but it is a revelation made by the Will of God,—the practical manifestation of Himself as the Ruler and Judge of His intelligent and responsible creatures. What-



soever rewards or punishments obtain under the Divine government are administered by the Infinite Will of the Governor Himself. But they are simply the expressions in judicial action of the nature and perfections of the Eternal, who is just and good beyond all degrees.

If, then, we are asked, What is there open to us as an alternative theory, in case we are convinced of the unsoundness of the Utilitarian doctrine? the answer is plain. Conscience, the imperative of Duty, within, has corresponding to it the standard of Right, the Moral Law. Where is this to be discovered? How is this to be determined?

1. Regard man's nature; and the Moral Law, the Ethical Standard, is to be found in the harmonious and perfect development and exercise of the powers with which the Creator has endowed him.
2. Regard the Moral Universe of which man forms a part; and the Moral Law, the Ethical Standard, is to be found in the Universal Order, the good, *i.e.*, the perfection, not of the individual agent, merely, but of all beings with whom he has relations, and whom his actions may affect.
3. Regard the Supreme Lord, Ruler, and Judge of the Moral Universe; and the Moral Law, the Ethical Standard, is to be found in the Divine nature and attributes of Him who is infinitely good.

Summary  
of the  
foundations  
of morality.

## IX.

UTILITARIANISM AND CHRISTIANITY CONTRASTED  
IN THEIR PRINCIPLES AND EFFECTS.

The general acceptance of Utilitarianism would be injurious to public morality.

ALTHOUGH it is true that there are amongst those who claim to be orthodox Christians, some who have given their assent to the theory known as Universalistic Hedonism, it is necessary to expose the erroneous nature of this system, because a theory is often held by those who are not alive to all its proper and logical consequences. The general acceptance and prevalence of Utilitarianism, moreover, would be most injurious to the public morals. If men generally come to believe that whatever promotes pleasure is right, that there is no test of rightness, except only a tendency to increase enjoyment and to diminish suffering, that Utility is to be enthroned as the sovereign principle by which mankind are to be swayed; then the general conception of human nature will be degraded, for human nature will be considered as constructed for no higher end than pleasure; then morality will suffer, for virtue will be despised, except where it is seen to be a means to happiness; and then Christianity will be discredited, for a religion which exalts righteousness and holi-

It would discredit Christianity.

ness, and which endeavours to raise men above the mere consideration of consequences, cannot but appear as hostile to the scientific law and aim of human life. Whilst our Saviour lays the greatest stress upon the morality of the heart, and insists upon the uprightness, the purity, the benevolence of the thoughts and desires; the Utilitarian doctrine offers no effectual check to the evil imaginations and longings, which are prone to flourish unrestrained in the recesses of the soul. There is danger lest those who deny the independent authority of right should deem themselves at liberty to indulge their covetousness and fleshly appetites, when they can do so without fear of detection, and without involving any manifest injury to their fellow creatures. Religion bids men aim at an ideal excellence, and reveals God as making this life one of moral discipline and probation; Utilitarianism bids men seek the general enjoyment, and either misrepresents God as supremely concerned for human pleasures, or else maligns Him as unable to secure an end which, nevertheless, upon the whole He aims at. For these reasons we think it necessary to protest against doctrines which in many respects harmonize with current feeling and wishes, to show that however they accord with imagination and sentiment, they have not the support of reason or of facts. Utilitarianism is in the view of those who look below the surface a

Whilst  
Utilitarian-  
ism regards  
life as  
given for  
enjoyment;  
Christianity  
regards life  
as pro-  
bationary  
and dis-  
ciplinary.

decidedly irreligious system of morals. It is not, indeed, denied that upon it may be based rules of conduct and legislative enactments which may secure a certain measure of individual and social well-being. But it leaves out of sight, where it does not actually negative, all that is of highest interest in human life. It dispenses with our spiritual nature, for it analyzes man's constitution into his capacity for pleasure and pain, and bases the rules of life upon that analysis. It dispenses with a future life, for it regards the present state of society in connection with prospective development upon earth, as a complete and sufficient whole. It dispenses with God, for even if it tolerates in words the supposition that there is a Supreme Ruler and Magistrate who sanctions beneficence of conduct; it has really no place for a Supreme Being, the Ideal of goodness, fellowship with whom is spiritual life. In a word, it makes man "of the earth, earthy." It favours such a view of the future of human society as was lately advocated by a distinguished English judge, who holds that religion may disappear, that Christian self-denial and self-sacrifice may vanish, and that life may still remain a very tolerable, indeed, a very agreeable and comfortable thing.<sup>1</sup> It secularizes all that has hitherto been irradiated

What Utilitarianism dispenses with.

It is favourable to Secularism.

<sup>1</sup> Vide Mr. Justice Stephen's article in the *Nineteenth Century* for May, 1884.

with a halo of Divine glory. Such is the profession of one of its champions :—

“Now,” says Mr. Herbert Spencer, “that moral injunctions are losing the authority given by their supposed sacred origin, the secularization of morals is becoming imperative.”<sup>1</sup>

Against such principles we have an impregnable bulwark in Christian morality. The superiority of Christianity over Utilitarianism is, upon an examination of the two systems,—the two theories of human life,—perfectly incontestable.

1. The best feature in the theory considered in this Tract, is its unselfishness, its benevolence. This is cordially acknowledged. But this feature is not original, it is borrowed from the New Testament, from the life of Christ Himself, from the teaching of His inspired Apostles. It is Jesus of Nazareth to whom we owe the maxim, “Do unto others as ye would that they should do unto you,” from whom we have received the great law of the redeemed society, the new commandment, “Love one another.” It is He who, by His teaching and by His example, has shown us the beauty of self-denial. The world had not to wait for Comte to teach the lesson, “Live for others;” it is a lesson which has been familiar for more than eighteen centuries in the Church of Christ. It was an Apostle of our Lord who bade us “bear one another’s burdens,” and “look every man upon the things of others.”

The unselfishness of Utilitarianism is borrowed from the New Testament

<sup>1</sup> *Data of Ethics*, p. 4.



The superiority of the aim of Christianity, which seeks not the enjoyment, but the improvement and moral and spiritual welfare of men.

2. When we ask, what services are we to render our fellow-men, how is our good-will to express itself?—the answer of the Christian to this inquiry sets his religion in a light far brighter and holier than that which the Utilitarian reply sheds upon his system. The latter professes a desire to promote the enjoyments of his fellow-creatures; this is his highest aim, for if he espouses the cause of Liberty, of Order, of Virtue,—it is only because he holds Liberty, Order, and Virtue to be conducive to human happiness. The Christian, on the other hand, seeks the glory of God in the moral and spiritual welfare of the race. All measures devised for human improvement are in his view inadequate, which do not go to the root of the evil. Believing that the Gospel is the Divine remedy for sin and its fearful consequences, he seeks to bring the Gospel home to the sinner's heart, with a view to his salvation. His aim is, by the use of Divinely appointed means, and in dependence upon Divine Agency, to bring about the spiritual renewal of those whom he desires to benefit. To him, the restoration of men to the Divine image and favour is a far loftier aim than the mere increase of their gratifications; and this is an estimate which a just mind will approve.

3. Whilst Utilitarians judge men by their outward actions, and commend such conduct as tends to promote pleasure, Christians are bound by the

teaching of their Divine Master to lay stress upon the thoughts and intents of the heart. The standard of Utility is independent of spiritual excellence; according to it, that course of action is deserving of approval which tends to the general pleasure. The standard of Christian morality has reference, not to acts merely, but to the dispositions, purposes, and habits of the soul; it requires sincerity, uprightness, purity of heart, as indispensable to acceptance with Him who judgeth not as man judgeth. If man have a spiritual nature, and if action is valuable as expressive of spiritual principles, then it is indisputable that Christianity, which places man's spiritual state and experience foremost in dignity and importance, takes a juster view of humanity than is taken by the Utilitarian philosophy.

Whilst  
Utilitarian-  
ism dwells  
upon  
action,  
Christianity  
insists upon  
inner spirit-  
ual good-  
ness.

4. When the motive to action is taken into consideration, our estimate of the comparative and indeed of the absolute merit of the Religion of Christ becomes still more apparent. Some Hedonist philosophers maintain that we seek to benefit others only for the sake of the pleasure such conduct brings to ourselves; others maintain that natural sympathy is a sufficient motive. The first of these principles of action must constantly fail to secure benevolent conduct; it operates only when the pleasure exceeds the sacrifice involved. The second is a natural and

The  
superior ex-  
cellence of  
Christianity.



The motive upon which Christianity relies, viz.—love and gratitude towards a Redeeming God.

powerful motive, but is not competent to vanquish human selfishness. How conspicuously superior to other considerations are those which Christianity brings to bear upon those who yield themselves to its sacred influences ! The love of God the Father is a motive to the soul that recognizes and feels it, sufficient to awaken love to “the brethren whom we have seen.” “If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” “The love of Christ constraineth us.” The Cross has ever been the most powerful corrective to human selfishness, the most powerful incentive to human philanthropy. From the Cross an inspiration proceeds which is sufficient to sustain the Christian labourer in his service, to nerve the Christian soldier for his warfare. He who seeks the good of his fellow-men can come under no power so invincible as that which is supplied by the love and sacrifice of the Redeemer, who “bare our sins in His own body on the tree.” For this power reaches and sways the inmost heart of the believer.

Failure of Hedonistic effort.

5. Let it be borne in mind that those who on the Hedonistic system seek the happiness of their fellow-men, often fail in their endeavours ; for happiness is not a commodity that can be transferred from one to another. Neither can they be assured of attaining happiness for themselves. On the other hand, the Christian, seeking a higher aim than pleasure, will not be left unrecompensed.

If the Universe is the work of a righteous and benevolent God, who has the highest moral ends before Him in the government of the conscious and voluntary natures He has created, it is reasonable to believe that ultimately He will confer happiness upon those who are obedient and submissive to His will. The Christian cannot seek enjoyment, either for himself or for others, as the highest aim of his action. Fellowship with God, likeness to God in moral attributes: this is his highest conception of well-being. Yet, finally and in eternity, a character in harmony with Divine rectitude and purity cannot but be appointed to experience the truest happiness, whatever may be the calamities and sorrows of the earthly life. There is accordingly the glorious prospect before the Christian of realizing for himself, and for those whose welfare he is the means of promoting, the inexhaustible meaning of the exclamation of the Psalmist, "In Thy presence is fulness of JOY; in Thy right hand there are PLEASURES for evermore"!

Success of  
Christian  
effort

The  
Christian  
attains final  
acceptance  
and  
everlasting  
felicity.





# AUGUSTE COMTE

AND THE

## “RELIGION OF HUMANITY.”

BY THE

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AUTHOR OF

“WITNESS OF MAN’S MORAL NATURE TO CHRISTIANITY;” “MODERN PESSIMISM;”  
“UTILITARIANISM,” ETC., ETC.



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56 PATERNOSTER ROW, AND 65 ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD,  
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## Argument of the Tract.

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THE process is described by which Comte, the author of the "Positive Philosophy," which limits human knowledge to the results of observation and experiment, came to be the founder of the "Religion of Humanity." His aim is acknowledged to have been the illumination of the intellect by the heart. The Comtists are shown to elevate mankind, and especially illustrious benefactors of the race, and woman, as the emotional and spiritual sex, into the object of worship and veneration. The Positivist Church and its organization are described, and the moral, political, and social views of Comte's followers are stated.

The Tract then proves that the Religion of Humanity is both atheistic and idolatrous, that human beings are not worthy objects of supreme reverence and adoration, and that true prayer is not a possible exercise on the part of those who disbelieve in a Being almighty and benevolent. Positivism is shown to be lacking in moral authority over human conduct. The unreality of the Positivist immortality is exhibited.

The Religion of Humanity is then in several particulars contrasted with the Religion of Christ, with the result of showing the essential superiority of the latter in every respect,

# AUGUSTE COMTE,

## AND

### "THE RELIGION OF HUMANITY."



#### I.

#### THE AUTHOR AND ORIGIN OF THE RELIGION OF HUMANITY.



AUGUSTE COMTE, who was born in 1798, and who died in 1857, was a man who made his mark upon the intellectual history of this century. His reputation and influence have not been limited to his native country—France—but have, in the course of a generation, spread through the civilised world. He founded a school of philosophy; but his power has been felt far beyond the limits of his school. His spirit has penetrated many students and thinkers who are not adherents of the system known by his name. Comte has been called by an admirer "the Bacon of the nineteenth century;" we may dismiss such an estimate of his rank as exaggerated, and may yet admit that he has made for himself a place among the intellectual and social leaders of our time. It is further claimed for him that he has invented a new religion.

Comte is a thinker who has exercised great influence both in France and elsewhere.

His attainments were great; his passion for classification was excessive; his ambition was vast.

In his youth and early manhood, Comte was a most diligent and enthusiastic reader, and under the influence especially of Saint Simon and de Maistre, the Utopian Socialists of the day, an ardent student of all social questions. His attainments in mathematics, his extensive acquaintance with European history, his knowledge of the physical sciences, in the stage of development in which they existed in his early days, are all admitted and recognised. His sympathies were less with the destructive tendency, which originated with Voltaire and Rousseau, than with what he deemed the constructive forces, represented by Diderot, Hume, and Condorcet. He regarded Bichat and Gall as his precursors in science. Possessing unbounded self-confidence, and a passion—even a genius—for classification, Comte made it his ambitious aim, by means of his teaching and his writings, to reconstitute science and philosophy, to revolutionize education, and thus to regenerate humanity.

The "positive" philosophy would limit knowledge to what can be acquired by observation and experiment.

POSITIVISM is the name given by its author to the vast body of doctrine presented to the world by this professed prophet and priest of the nineteenth century. By the term "positive" Comte intended to designate such knowledge as is based upon actual observation and experiment,—the accepted methods of modern physical science. Nothing else is, in his view, true knowledge; philosophy, as hitherto understood, and of course theology of

every kind, are dismissed, as outgrown and abandoned by this age, steeped as it is in the modern scientific spirit. Comte's writings were encyclopædic; his system was professedly comprehensive of all human knowledge. His two great works, *Positive Philosophy* and *Positive Polity*, were designed to include all the sciences of nature and of man, and the classification of these sciences was represented as being the true and indeed the only philosophy.

Evidently, "Positivism," strictly interpreted, is inconsistent with all metaphysics and all theology.

Much of what Comte wrote has no longer any special value or interest. But in two directions, one speculative and the other practical, his influence survives to the present day. He advanced a startling theory of human development, and he propounded a religion and established a church. The first of these must be briefly explained, as very closely connected with the second.

In two directions Comte's influence still survives.

The intellectual growth of mankind is represented by Comte as passing through three successive stages or epochs. The first of these is the *theological* stage of knowledge, in which the facts of nature are explained by the supposed presence and action of supernatural beings. Men are supposed to begin their religious development with fetichism, to proceed to the higher position of polytheism, and thence to advance to Monotheism, which is deemed the summit of this first movement. The second is the *metaphysical* stage, in which all unseen personal agencies are discarded, and

His doctrine of the three stages of the intellectual development of mankind.



According to Comte, the "positive" stage is to supersede the theological and the metaphysical.

principles, laws, abstractions which are the creation of the mind, are represented as accounting for natural phenomena. The third is the *positive* stage, which has now at length been reached by the most enlightened of mankind. These have outgrown the intellectual illusions of childhood and youth, and are content to take phenomena as they find them, to classify them in co-existences and sequences, and to renounce as vain and useless all search for causes, whether personal or metaphysical.

Until he approached middle age, Comte altogether ignored and repudiated all religion.

Such a doctrine as this certainly appears to forbid scientific men to retain religion of any kind, in fact to preclude the possibility of religion except in the case of the ignorant and unreasoning. Through the greater part of his life, Comte seems to have regarded science as completely satisfying the wants of his nature, and accordingly to have utterly ignored all religious beliefs and practices. How, it may well be asked, can the so-called "positive" stage of human development admit of a Deity, of prayer, of thanksgiving, of a priesthood and sacraments, of immortality? The answer to this question must be sought in Comte's own personal experience, in circumstances occurring in his life, in the history of his heart. The process by which he came to feel the need of religion for himself, and so to found a religion in his judgment adapted to a scientific age, is well worthy of careful attention.

It was by feminine influence that Comte was led to crown the "Positive" philosophy by the "Positive" religion, usually designated, to distinguish it from Theism, "the Religion of Humanity." Comte's marriage was not a happy one; and after many years of wedded life, the *savant* was separated, on account of incompatibility of temper, from the wife who had borne with him in his petulance, and watched over him during a period of mental derangement. After this separation he made the acquaintance of Madame Clotilde de Vaux—a young woman of thirty, and seventeen years his junior—who came to exercise an extraordinary influence over his character, and indirectly over his teaching. The object of his admiration was, like himself, unhappy in marriage, and was separated from her husband, who was at this time a convict undergoing punishment. Her qualities of understanding and of heart called forth the devotion of the Positivist prophet, opened a fresh fountain of feeling in his nature, and led him to take a different view of human life. He wrote of his "St. Clotilde" in terms of extravagant eulogy, as

His intimacy with Clotilde de Vaux was the occasion of a great change in his view of the necessities of man's moral nature and life.

"the incomparable angel appointed in the course of human destiny to transmit to me the results of the gradual evolution of our moral nature."

The friendship lasted but a year; Madame de Vaux died in 1846, but bequeathed to her admirer an influence which lasted all the remainder of his

From this time Comte regarded the emotional life as more important than the intellectual.

life, and which affected all his subsequent speculations. From this period may be dated what has been termed the new birth of Comte's moral nature. Up to this point knowledge had been everything to him; henceforward he confessed the supremacy of the affections and the claims of what he held to be religion. In the dedication to Clotilde's memory, of his great work on *Positive Polity*, Comte records that it was her influence that had taught him the preponderance of universal love.

"After frankly devoting the first half of my life to the development of the heart by the intellect, I saw its second half consecrated by the illumination of the intellect by the heart, so necessary to give the true character to great social truths."

This change on Comte's part caused a schism in the ranks of Comte's followers.

Some refused to follow him in his new departure.

Thus Positivism was transformed from a very secular doctrine into one in which everything was subordinated to emotion, morality, worship, and religion. The change was variously regarded. Many of Comte's followers refused to accompany him upon this new departure. Such was the case with his most distinguished French disciple, M. Littré; whilst his English admirer and friend, Mr. J. S. Mill, criticised the master's aberration with extreme severity, and went so far as to say:—

"M. Comte gradually acquired a real hatred for scientific and all intellectual pursuits, and was bent on retaining no more of them than was strictly indispensable."

On the other hand, the thorough-going scholars in the Positivist school regard the emotional and moral stage of Comte's life with reverence and

gratitude. An English representative of what may be called Ecclesiastical Positivism speaks thus warmly of the high-priest of the new religion:—

Others admired and accepted his later teaching, adopting his new religion.

"It should become clear to us that the philosophical and political thinker had merged in the saint, that the life of thought was so fruitful of good because it was a life of prayer, that if he preached sacrifice to others, no man ever lived who imposed it more completely on himself; that if he preached humanity to others, he had been the first to give her all, to consecrate every faculty and power to her service; that if he made love his watchword, it was because he was the most loving of men."<sup>1</sup>

Comte's own view of the relation between the two sections of his life is apparent from his remark with reference to Madame de Vaux:—

"Through her I have at length become for humanity, in the strictest sense, a two-fold organ. . . My career had been that of Aristotle—I should have wanted energy for that of St. Paul, but for her. I had extracted sound philosophy from real science; I was enabled by her to found on the basis of that philosophy the universal religion."<sup>2</sup>

## II.

### THE POSITIVIST VIEW OF RELIGION.

COMTE and his followers disbelieve in the supernatural; to their minds faith in an unseen Creator and Ruler of the universe appears unscientific, and unworthy of enlightened cultivators of physical science, of "Positive" knowledge. On the other hand, the master, and those of the scholars who

The Comtists disbelieve in God.

<sup>1</sup> Congreve, *The Annual Address*, Jan. 1, 1881.

<sup>2</sup> *Catechism*, Preface, p. 19.

But those who agree with Comte in his later development maintain the necessity of religion as a power to influence men's individual and social life.

Comte considered that he reconciled Religion with Science by substituting humanity for God as the supreme object of reverence and worship.

follow him in the later development of his teaching, have always and earnestly repudiated secularism, and have claimed to be truly religious,—only with a kind of religiousness becoming, as they think, to men living in a scientific age, and having no sympathy with superstition! The Positivist religion boasts itself as “the concurrence of feeling with reason in the regulation of our action.” Comte himself taught that religion has two functions: viz., to order the life of the individual, and to combine men into a social unity. It must, as an intellectual power, satisfy the mind with truth, the object of belief; and it must, as a moral power, satisfy the heart with appropriate emotion.

This, however, is morality rather than religion. Comte saw that men need not only a law of conduct, but an object of reverence. He accordingly sought to replace the sentiments and motives evoked by Christianity by raising HUMANITY into the supreme place in human regard. He was right in recognizing the superiority of man over matter, of human virtue above physical law. But he was wrong in exalting man into the place of God. However, the Comtists believe that religion is possible upon their basis of the supremacy of humanity. Positivism, one of them tells us,

“will be religion, inasmuch as it will infuse a grandeur and a unity into human toil, knowledge, and interests, by filling them with all the light of duty, and the warmth of a social affection. In every part it will be a human religion, a perfectly practical



and mundane religion, grounded in thought, and issuing in act ; beginning on earth, and ending in man.”<sup>1</sup>

The English school of Positivists lay the greatest stress upon the religious aspect of their system, and persuade themselves that all the good results which Christianity has brought to past ages may be secured by a religion more in harmony, as they hold, with the spirit of our own times. Thus Mr. Frederic Harrison urges :

In this belief the English Positivists are in accord with their master.

“All the eternal and essential institutions of religion are not only open to Positivism, but are profoundly developed and embraced by it. It is familiar too with that sense of individual weakness and yearning for consolation, that spirit of humiliation before Providence, and contrition in the consciousness of guilt, that peace within in communing with an abiding sweetness and goodness without, that unquenchable assurance of triumph in final good—all of which are the old and just privileges of the purest Christianity.”<sup>2</sup>

The reader may well be curious to know what there is in the Positivist religion to justify such assertions and such expectations as are contained in the writings of Comte and his followers. Of Christianity we know that it professes to reveal a God of righteousness and of mercy, a God loving and pitying mankind, and able to save and bless those sinful beings who turn to Him in penitence and in faith ; that it professes to reveal a Divine Saviour, and a Divine Helper, unseen but ever present ; that it brings new motives, new powers,

We know what Christianity can do, and has done, for mankind.

<sup>1</sup> Congreve, *New Year's Address*, for 1880.

*Contemporary Review*, November, 1875.

We accordingly ask, Can the "Religion of Humanity" rival the Religion of Christ, as a Revelation and as a Moral Force?

new hopes to men ; that it professes to reveal a future state with prospects of retribution and of recompense. Such a religion must have, and actually has and exercises, a vast spiritual power. What has Comtism to offer to the world, that it ventures to vie with the faith of Christ? So far as can be gathered from its documents, it offers us a body of scientific doctrine, the lessons and examples of human history, a scheme of worship, with the apparatus of priesthood, liturgy, sacraments, the outward and visible sign of human federation, and a system of government of the most fantastical order. Religion is to centre in Humanity. To quote the words of the founder of this religion :

"Under the permanent inspiration of Universal Love, the business of doctrine, worship, and discipline, is to study, to honour, and to serve the great Being, the crown of all human existence."<sup>1</sup>

### III.

#### THE POSITIVIST GOD.

ALL religion assumes the existence and the rule of a higher Being, worthy of worship and service. Comte proposed that reverence, praise and devotion should be rendered, not to a Deity above humanity, the Creator and the Governor of all men, but to humanity, the collective human race, and especially to the great men of the past. Posi

Positivism personifies humanity.

<sup>1</sup> *Positive Polity*, vol. II., p. 66.

ivism means the sovereignty of the dead over the living. Comte personified Humanity.

It proposes the personification of humanity as the Deity whom men should worship.

"We condense the whole of our positive conceptions in the one single idea of an immense and eternal Being, Humanity, destined by sociological laws to constant development under the reponderating influence of biological and cosmological necessities."<sup>1</sup>

"Towards Humanity, who is for us the only true great being, we, the conscious elements of whom she is composed, shall henceforth direct every aspect of our life, individual or collective. Our thoughts will be devoted to the knowledge of humanity, our affections to her love, our actions to her service."<sup>2</sup>

But we are not to understand by the Humanity we are summoned to worship, all mankind, "good, bad, and indifferent," but only such as have sought the common good. The "mere digesting machines" may, it is suggested, be replaced by the nobler among the brutes! The God, or Goddess, whom men should worship, is in a measure their own creation; Comte reminds men of the duty of preserving, developing, improving, and perfecting their Deity. But we are assured that the object of worship is no abstraction, but the actual assemblage of those who have led a noble and useful life.

But in constructing his Divinity Comte eliminates the worthless and useless, and conjoins only select and admired representatives of our race.

It was, however, perceived by the founder of the Positivist religion that "Humanity" is to men generally somewhat vague, that they need to adore what is concrete, living, and personal. Thus

Such an object of worship is evidently vague, and hard to realise.

<sup>1</sup> *The Catechism of Positive Religion*, p. 63.

<sup>2</sup> *Positive Polity*, vol. I., p. 264.

Hence Comte proposes that woman, as the emotional sex, should be the object of adoration and prayer.

Comte was led to the proposal that WOMAN should be the object of ordinary and private worship. The "affective sex" (he held) embodies, in its best representatives, what is most worthy of religious reverence.

"Prayer would be of little value unless the mind could clearly define its object. The worship of woman satisfies this condition, and may thus be of greater efficacy than the worship of God."<sup>1</sup>

Mother, wife, and daughter are to be venerated as types of moral excellence.

The worship of the Virgin Mary, so prevalent throughout the so-called Catholic world, was regarded by this ingenious idolater, as a happy introduction to the *cultus* of that graceful personification of humanity which we are called upon to admire in womankind. The mother speaks of the past, suggests obedience, and requires veneration. The wife speaks of the present, suggests union, and calls for attachment. The daughter is of the future, she needs protection, and is regarded with benevolence. Such a group of female relatives is commended as constituting collectively a suitable object of daily adoration. Women, however, are expected to worship the mother, the husband, and the son. It must not be supposed that this teaching was a mere eccentricity of Comte, occasioned by his admiration for his St. Clotilde. Mr. Congreve, a leader of English Positivism, presents the case very clearly:—

"What is the most universal constituent of this composite spirituality? The answer is clear. It is in woman that we find

<sup>1</sup> *Positive Polity*, vol. I., p. 209.

it; and therefore it is that, as the most universal and the most powerful of all modifying agents, woman is in our religion the representative of humanity.”<sup>1</sup>

It may appear to the uninitiated that there is some confusion involved in the proposal to conjoin the worship of the Supreme Being, *i.e.*, the ideal Humanity, with that of an individual woman. Such a belief does not vanish when we consider Comte’s account of his own habitual worship of Clotilde. He anticipated the “extension to others of his own personal worship of the angel from whom he derived its chief suggestions.” He thus described the combination at which he arrived:

In his worship of Clotilde, Comte set an example which he desired his disciples to follow.

“She [*i.e.*, Clotilde] is for all time incorporated into the true Supreme Being, of whom her tender image is allowed to be for me the best representative. In each of my three daily prayers I adore both together.”<sup>2</sup>

It would be interesting to know whether any habitual votaries of Clotilde de Vaux are to be found in the select circle of our English Positivists.

#### IV.

#### THE WORSHIP OF HUMANITY.

THE worship presented by the religious man to his deity is twofold. He brings his offering, a sacrifice, a hymn of praise, or an act of homage or obedience; and, whilst acknowledging favours received, he prays for spiritual or temporal good.

The prayers which Comte enjoins are rather acts of meditation and aspiration.

<sup>1</sup> *Human Catholicism*, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> *Catechism*, Preface, p. 33.



Now Comte enjoins prayer, or rather meditation and aspiration, under the designations, "commemoration" and "effusion." Erroneous as is his conception of the object of worship, his account of fellowship with the Unseen is not without dignity and beauty.

The Religion of Humanity prescribes both private and public devotion.

"Prayer in its purest form offers the best type of life, and conversely life in its noblest aspect consists in one long prayer. The humblest home in Positivism should contain, better even than under Polytheism, a sort of private chapel, in which the worship of the true guardian angels would daily remind each Positivist of the need of adoring the finest personifications of humanity."<sup>1</sup>

Private prayer is enjoined upon the disciple of Comte. He devotes

"the first hour of each day to place the whole day under the protection of the best representatives of humanity."<sup>2</sup>

He offers a shorter prayer at mid-day, and again at night as he sinks into slumber. The recommendation with regard to family prayer reminds us of the immemorial practice of the Chinese:—

"The father of the family invokes, as household gods, the chief ancestors of the family."<sup>3</sup>

Stated seasons of worship are appointed.

Private prayer should be observed daily, weekly, and yearly; public prayer weekly, monthly, and yearly. Whilst worship is to be offered only to the "great being," Humanity, it is contemplated that the Positivist temples shall contain a visible representation of the unseen object of adoration.

<sup>1</sup> *Positive Polity*, vol. II., p. 68.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* vol. IV., p. 103.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* vol. IV., p. 107.

"In painting or in sculpture equally, the symbol of our Divinity will always be a woman of the age of thirty, with her son in her arms. The pre-eminence, religiously considered, of the affective sex, ought to be the principal feature in our emblematic representation, whilst the active sex must remain under her holy guardianship."<sup>1</sup>

If it is asked whether it is possible for Positivists to worship their human god in the methods consecrated by the usage of devout generations, the material for an answer to this question may be found in the prayers used by the priest of the Positivist community in London, which are prefixed to the annual addresses delivered upon New Year's Day, the festival of Humanity, and regularly published. These prayers are addressed to

Some of the public prayers used by the English Positivists are published.

"the Great Power, acknowledged as the highest, Humanity, whose children and servants we are."<sup>2</sup>

The petitions are, for the most part, petitions for a better knowledge of Humanity, with a view to warmer love and truer service, and that life may be strengthened and ennobled by sympathy and by mutual aid. Among the blessings ardently sought are union, unity, and continuity; but there is a lack of definiteness in the language, arising from the fact that the worshippers have no clear apprehension of the moral and religious qualities which alone can make these blessings precious and desirable. It is observable that the expressions of the Positivist prayers are largely borrowed from

The objects of supplication are necessarily somewhat indefinite.

<sup>1</sup> *Catechism*, p. 142.

<sup>2</sup> Vide *New Years' Addresses*, *passim*.

the Christian Scriptures. The Positivists have their benediction, viz.:—

The Religion of Humanity sanctions the use of Benedictions and Collects.

"The faith of Humanity, the hope of Humanity, the love of Humanity, bring you comfort, and teach you sympathy, give you peace in yourselves and peace with others, now and for ever. Amen."

There is an Advent collect, which represents Comte as the Messiah; the opening clauses shall be quoted to give the reader an insight into the evident desire of the Positivists to link their religion on, in thought and phrase, to the religion they hope to supersede:—

"Thou power Supreme, who hast hitherto guided Thy children under other names, but in this generation hast come to Thy own in Thy own proper person, revealed for all ages to come by Thy servant, Auguste Comte," etc.

Christian manuals of devotion are adapted to the use of the "Human Catholics."

In the same spirit, Thomas à Kempis' devotional manual "Of the Imitation of Christ," is approved by the Positivists as edifying reading; in fact, Comte himself used it daily in his religious exercises; but that it may be adapted to the use of "Human Catholics," it is directed that "Humanity" be everywhere substituted for "God," and "the social type" for the personal type of Jesus! What is left, when the Father and the Saviour of man are eliminated from this famous book of Christian devotion, may readily be imagined.

In the adoration and prayer offered to Humanity by her votaries, one thing is very obvious Whilst

the petitions of Christian worshippers are presented to a Being justly and confidently believed to comprehend and to sympathise with the wants of the petitioners, and to possess the power and disposition to grant the favours sought,—no Positivist can for a moment suppose that the dead and vanished persons who constitute the humanity of past ages, can possibly be conscious of the desires professedly poured into their ears, or can possibly do anything in response to prayer, to fulfil the supplications of their worshippers.

It is unreasonable in Positivists to pray to those who in the view of the worshippers, have no longer actual existence and consciousness.

## V.

### THE CHURCH OF HUMANITY.

It was Comte's aim to found a society composed of all who should acknowledge himself as the prophet of the new and crowning dispensation, and who should accordingly regard Humanity as the object of supreme reverence and affection. He perceived the mighty hold which Roman Catholicism had for centuries exercised over the mind and life of Europe, and he attributed this power to the adaptation of this mediæval system to the emotional and the social nature of man. He accordingly set himself to copy the methods and the very details of Romanism, and to institute a church upon the broader basis of *Human Catholicism*. There was this difference between the two

Comte aimed at imitating the Roman Catholic Church, but substituted his own ideas for those embodied in Roman usage.

systems: Roman Catholicism carried the supernatural into every region of human life, whilst Positivism sought to exercise religious influence by the use of means purely natural and human.

Thus the Church of Humanity came into existence. The founder of the Church drew up its calendar,—a very remarkable document which bears witness alike to the extent of Comte's knowledge, his love of system, and his width of sympathy. Each of the thirteen lunar months of the year is sacred to the memory of a great leader of humanity in some department of thought or of activity. Thus the first month is known by the name of Moses, and every one of the twenty-eight days in the month is commemorative of some distinguished man associated with the early religions of the race. The seventh days—the four Sabbaths of the month—are connected with the names of Numa, Buddha, Confucius and Mahomet—chiefs in religious belief and in church organisation. The second month is consecrated to Homer and the ancient poets; the third to Aristotle and the ancient philosophers; and so on with the rest. The thirteenth month is known by the name of the physiologist, Bichat, and its days are all connected with the memory of men eminent in modern science. The complementary day is the "Festival of all the dead," and the additional day in leap-year is the "Festival of holy women."

The  
Positivist  
Calendar  
celebrates  
the virtues  
and services  
of the  
illustrious  
dead.



Comte also published a system of Sociolatriy, comprising eighty-one annual festivals, upon which the worship of Humanity should be celebrated. These were intended to replace the "holy days" and "saints' days," which form so important a part of the observances prescribed by Rome.

There are Positivist festivals corresponding to Catholic Saints' Days.

In this system it must be evident to the reader that man is everywhere; whilst God is nowhere. Indeed, the religion of Humanity has been well described as "Catholicism without God."

The Religion of Humanity exalts man and banishes God.

Positivism was intended by its founder to have its priesthood, supported at first by the free contributions of believers, and when the faith shall be generally adopted, by grants from the public treasury. Aspirants are to be admitted to the priestly office at the age of twenty-eight, vicars at thirty-five, and priests proper at forty-two. Marriage is required of those in the second stage:—

Positivism has its priesthood.

"for the priestly office cannot be duly performed unless the man be constantly under the influence of woman."

The obligations of the priests of this religion.

The business of priests is to teach the sciences, and to preach upon the duties of private and public life. The supreme head of the body is the high priest, who is to be invested with absolute power.<sup>1</sup> In his love of organisation, Comte went so far as to fix even the number and the stipends of the Positivist clergy.

<sup>1</sup> Comte was succeeded in the Pontifical office by M. Lafitte, the recognized head of orthodox Positivism.

It has its sacraments.

The character of these "sacraments."

Nine sacraments were instituted: presentation, initiation, admission, destination, marriage, maturity, retirement, transformation, and incorporation. In the case of women, the fourth, sixth and seventh sacraments are dispensed with. The reader cannot fail to observe that, whilst the Christian sacraments are revelations of Divine purposes, and symbols of Divine acts, the Positivist institutions in question are all ordinances based merely upon human life, especially upon events occurring in its several stages.

The organisation of the "Church of Humanity" in Paris, its headquarters.

It may be asked, Has any attempt been made to realise these schemes? In Paris, the metropolis of the Religion of Humanity, the institutions founded by Comte are maintained: there is a Positivist society, and high priest, there is public worship and commemoration, there are authorised publications advocating the Comtist doctrines.

The position of this "Church" in England.

The Positivists of London, who accept the later phase of Comte's teaching, are organised into a religious sect,—numerically indeed small, but comprising men of learning, ability, character, and influence. They hold religious service every Sunday morning, and social meetings on five Sunday evenings in the course of the year. The London members of the "Church of Humanity" observe the appointed festivals, make contributions

towards their sacerdotal fund, their school fund, their printing fund, and in their proceedings act in some measure in accordance with the ordinary usages of other English congregations.

In addition to two congregations in the metropolis, the religious Positivists of this country have regular meetings in a few of our large towns. In 1876 they acknowledged that, outside of France, they had no one in communion with them on the Continent of Europe, with the exception of *one* person in Sweden! In the same year it was mentioned that *one* Oriental—an Indian—was in fellowship with the body. They do not, however, seem discouraged by the slow progress they make as an organization, but rather look hopefully to the diffusion of their principles among those who do not join their assemblies.

The Religion of Humanity at present counts but few adherents.

This slow progress in a state of society which might be supposed to be peculiarly suited to the development of this humanitarian faith is certainly significant and suggestive, especially when compared with the rapid advance of various forms of Christian congregational life. Several obscure sects of English Christians, even with all the disadvantages of poverty, social insignificance, and an illiterate ministry, have been seen so to grow that, within a few years of their establishment, they have come to number hundreds of congregations and tens of thousands of adherents. The

Their rate of increase contrasted with the growth of some obscure Christian sects.

The  
difficulty of  
keeping  
together  
the two  
Positive con-  
gregations  
in London.

“Religion of Humanity,” on the other hand, has so little attraction for those who are supposed to be yearning for such satisfaction as it professes to offer, that, notwithstanding all the advantages which intellect, learning, and social position confer upon its leading representatives, it can with difficulty gather and keep together in the metropolis two small congregations! The adhesion of individuals is chronicled as matter for rejoicing; and it is recorded with seriousness as a reason for congratulation and as an omen of prosperity, that in a certain provincial congregation progress has been so striking and so encouraging that a harmonium has actually been introduced with the laudable design of aiding the public devotions of the faithful!

## VI.

### THE PRACTICAL SIDE OF THE RELIGION OF HUMANITY.

Comte had  
definite  
political  
plans.

COMTE, though an ardent theorist, was not content to propound a so-called science of Sociology, — a science which aims at reducing all the facts relating to human societies and their actions to great generalisations and laws. He believed himself to be legislating for what, in his own grandiose way, he termed “the Republic of the West,” by which he meant the nations of Western Europe, with their offspring in America and the Colonies. He imagined

that the power of the Religion of Humanity would prove sufficient to induce the nations to resolve themselves into small communities, each including from one to three millions of inhabitants,—to give up "nationality,"—and to accept as the basis of their true unity the sway of the Positive faith. The new religion was to remould all political institutions. Comte had great hope that the proletariat, *i.e.*, the working classes, would hail his doctrine with enthusiasm. He intended that there should be an industrial patriciate having charge of the proletariat. These capitalists and masters were to include bankers, merchants, manufacturers, and agriculturists. A council of bankers was to rule all society ; with the advice of the Western priesthood, acting under the direction of the high priest of Humanity, this council was to fix the rate of wages, and to administer the social and industrial business of the civilised world.

He aimed at reconstructing society in the civilised nations.

Whilst the Positivists in our country claim to be, as a body, entirely dissevered from party politics, they professedly make it their aim to leaven national life with moral principle, and to influence national action in favour of justice and peace. Accepting the Christian doctrine of the universal brotherhood of men, they are often to be found advocating the Christian polity of mutual forbearance and goodwill.

The English Positivists endeavour to leaven politics with moral principle.

Comte himself was a very decided opponent of



Comte's conservatism.

those revolutionary forces which have during the last century played so mighty a part in the political life of his native country. His tendencies were mainly Conservative. He even hailed the accession to Imperial power of Napoleon III. He addressed the Czar of Russia, Nicholas I., in language of extravagant eulogy. It was his opposition to democracy, his subserviency to autocrats, that as much, perhaps, as his development of the religious stage of his doctrine, alienated from him some of his most admiring friends, especially his celebrated disciple, M. Littré. In his aversion to democracy Comte has not been followed by all his disciples. As a rule, the Positivists have cared more for the lofty ends of justice and peace, than for the special political means by which these ends may be sought and perhaps attained.

The influence of Positivism over English thinkers and writers.

Positivism has exercised a powerful influence over our contemporary English literature. We do not refer merely to the scientific, anti-philosophical, and anti-theological bias which such writers as the late Mr. G. H. Lewes received from the study of Comte's works, but also to the quasi-religious ideas which were imbibed from the same source by the late "George Eliot," and which are advocated with so much persistency and fervour by Mr. Frederic Harrison.

The stories, poems, and essays of "George Eliot" bear more than mere traces of Positivism; the

authoress herself described her longest poem as "steeped" in this doctrine. That devotion to the welfare of others, which Comte denominated "altruism," was ardently adopted and commended by this writer, who seems to have substituted this form of benevolence for one more distinctively Christian. She was also possessed with the Comtean belief regarding the reign of the dead over the living. But she was utterly opposed to the Christian doctrine of God, and had no faith in Revelation. In her life occurs the following remarkable utterance:—

George Eliot adopted Comte's principles, and inculcated them in her writings.

"My books have for their main bearing a conclusion—without which I could not have cared to write any representation of human life, namely, that the fellowship between man and man, which has been the principle of development, social and moral, is not dependent on conceptions of what is not man; and that the idea of God, so far as it has been a high spiritual influence, is the idea of a goodness entirely human, *i.e.*, an exaltation of the human."<sup>1</sup>

The main bearing of her books

We do not hesitate to say that just here, where this popular authoress placed her moral strength,—just here lay her moral weakness. She was well aware of the immense power for good residing in Christian faith when sincere and active. But the general tendency of her works is to suggest the possibility of a pure, self-denying, bright, and beneficent life, altogether apart from the motives and the hopes of the Christian Revelation, altogether

The impression produced by her works.

<sup>1</sup> *George Eliot's Life*. Letter to Lady Ponsonby. Vol. III., p. 245.



Her better characters unnatural because the motives that would account for their actions are ignored.

apart from belief in a Divine Ruler, and from expectation of retribution and of conscious development in a future state. Some of the better characters she describes strike the reader as unnatural, because the principles and motives which would fairly account for their actions, are ignored. A painful sense of defect mars the satisfaction of even the admiring reader; his mind seems to ache for truths withheld, for prospects darkened, for spiritual motives expunged by the destructive power of unbelief from the probationary and disciplinary life of man.

## VII.

POSITIVISM, THOUGH AN ADVANCE UPON SOME OTHER FORMS OF UNBELIEF, IS VIRTUALLY ATHEISTIC.

If Revelation be rejected what substitute do unbelievers offer for the satisfaction and guidance of mankind?

WHAT, let us now ask, is offered by those eminent and able men, upon the Continent of Europe and in our own country, who reject revelation, and with revelation all that is supernatural in Christianity,—what is offered as the substitute? There are indeed some unbelievers who consider that no substitute is necessary or desirable, that man has no need of religion, that this life and its pursuits, interests, and pleasures are all-sufficient. But thorough-going Secularism (as this doctrine is termed) finds adherents chiefly among those of a

lower intellectual and moral type. By men of historical knowledge and philosophical insight it is generally admitted that man's higher nature can only be developed, that his higher aspirations can only be satisfied, when he accepts the declarations and gives himself up to the influence of religion. But the question is, Where shall the basis, the scope, the motive of religion be found, if God be denied, if revelation be pronounced impossible, if the supernatural element in the Bible be deemed incredible, if a future life be dismissed as an unfounded and unverifiable dream?

Secularism is out of the question, as having attractions only for the lowest class intellectually and morally.

Two answers are given to this question. The answer given by Strauss in Germany, and by the author of *Natural Religion* in this country, is this: that the universe itself, as studied and represented by science, affords scope for our religious feelings; that to admire nature, its vastness, regularity, and beauty, is sufficient for a religious being; that the highest and purest emotions are thus evoked, and that human life is thus saved from Secularism. Further, as man is, in the view of these speculators, part of the universe, the productions of human art and the exhibitions of human virtue, are to be taken into account in estimating the power of so-called Cosmic religion.

But learned and able men propose as the religion of the future, the reverence for natural law and for ideal beauty: this is Cosmism.

But there is another answer, that namely with which this tract is concerned. The Comtists differ not only from the Secularists, who think that no

The  
Positivists,  
deeming  
this an in-  
sufficient  
foundation  
for religion,  
propose that  
the Human  
shall be  
deified.

religion is necessary, but further, from the Cosmists, who think that the admiration of the universe is the all-sufficient religion for man. In the view of the Positivists there is something better than the facts and processes which can be formulated in mathematical and physical laws. MAN is superior to unconseious, to irrational nature. And since the Comtists believe that God is only the name for an abstraction, formed by projecting our own mental and moral character and attributes into the imaginary realm of the supernatural, they ask us to renounce what they regard as superstition, and to rest satisfied with what is undoubtedly real,—the race to which we belong and the characteristics which, as human beings, we share.

The  
Religion of  
Humanity  
is an  
advance  
upon  
Secularism  
and upon  
Cosmism.

But it falls  
short of  
Theism.

We readily admit that it is a higher exercise of the soul to admire and to adore such human qualities as justice, love, and pity, than to admire and adore the revolutions of the planets, or the symmetries and correspondences observable in the various forms of life. But, after all said in favour of the Positivist religion, it remains undisputed that *it is not Theism*. That there is a Power superior in might and duration even to Humanity the Comtists do not deny.<sup>1</sup> But Comte himself regarded the constitution of the universe as faulty; it often aroused his indignation, it never awakened

<sup>1</sup> Comte indeed recognized what has an apparent correspondence to the Christian Trinity, in the three great powers,—Space, the Earth, and Humanity.



his reverence. He traced no moral purpose in nature; and therefore we cannot be surprised that for him man was higher, more deserving of esteem and veneration than any power, knowable or unknowable, to which Humanity owes its origin and also the circumstances by which, upon this planet, the race of men has been encompassed.

In the view of the Christian, Positivism is atheism and idolatry; atheism, because denying the existence and rule of a living and personal, an almighty and righteous, a moral and supreme Ruler; idolatry, because substituting for the Object of worship whom Christians apprehend by faith, either an abstraction of the understanding, or else concrete, actual, and finite beings coming within the range of perception. Whilst, then, we can sympathize with the indignant and eloquent protests which the representatives of Positivism now and again utter when Secularism and Agnosticism outrage by their cynical negations the best feelings of mankind, we cannot be misled by our sentiments into the admission that the Religion of Humanity is properly entitled to the name of a religion,—since, if it is not without a *cultus*, it is without a revelation, without a law, without a gospel, without a God.

As denying a living God, it is atheistic.

As worshipping the creature instead of the Creator, it is idolatrous.

In exalting the human race to the highest position of honour and of reverence, the Positivists virtually affirm that no intelligence or virtue higher

Positivists  
confine their  
regard and  
reverence to  
finite and  
imperfect  
beings.

than the human can be known to us. They do not indeed pretend that man is the only rational and moral being in the universe. Professing to concern themselves only with what comes within the range of observation, they are content to recognise the existence of the human race and the manifestation in its best representatives of qualities higher than are discernible elsewhere. They refuse to consider the question whether the phenomena of the physical universe and the existence of conscious beings, involve or suggest a superhuman Power. Regarding this as a question which our intellect is unable to answer, they urge that, of what we really know, the human qualities—intellectual and moral—are most deserving of that admiration which is the nearest approach to worship allowed by their system.

We cannot  
consent to  
render to  
man what  
is due to  
God alone.

Now this proceeding cannot be witnessed without deep grief, without strenuous protest. It is not in our nature to shut our eyes to the evidences of a superior—a supreme Power presiding over the world, and revealing and exercising the attributes of reason, righteousness, and benevolence—attributes which properly and necessarily belong to a Person, a Divine Person. It is admitted that man is not supreme, that he is no explanation of his own existence, or of the existence of the material universe. Yet we are urged to concentrate our veneration and devotion upon man. This is a

demand with which our reason will not suffer us to comply. We cannot but look higher than to our fellow-creatures. We cannot but ask whether there is not sufficient evidence of the existence of a Creator, with glorious moral attributes. We cannot but withhold from the manifold imperfections of man the homage we are ready to yield to the infinite perfections of God.

Comte's hostility to every form of religion which acknowledges a Divine Ruler of the world, is decided and undisguised. The servants of humanity, in claiming as their due the general direction of this world

Comte was hostile to every form of Theism, to Monotheism as to other forms.

"exclude, once for all, from political supremacy, all the different servants of God—Catholic, Protestant, or Deist—as being at once behindhand and a cause of disturbance."<sup>1</sup>

Monotheism, which in the East assumes the form of Mohammedanism, and in the West that of Christianity,—forms mutually hostile and irreconcilable,—must, in Comte's judgment, abandon its pretensions, and must submit to be fused and superseded by the religion of the future, the religion of Positivism, of Humanity.

It has been maintained, by Strauss and by many of his English disciples, that we may reject Christianity and yet may retain religion. But facts do not favour this contention. Those who repudiate the Religion of the New Testament may in doing so resolve that they will substitute

<sup>1</sup> *Catechism*, Preface, p. 1.

The impossibility of rejecting Christianity and yet retaining a Religion.

for it some other religion, more rational and credible as they think,—but still a religion. But experience shows how slender a hold such a resolution has upon the mind of the infidel. That Auguste Comte was sincere in his profession, that for him religion was of supreme importance, we do not question. But what are the facts with regard to his followers? It is well known that many who regard the founder of Positivism as one of the greatest of philosophers have no sympathy with his religious views, but regard them as signs of his utter dotage! They see no consistency between the Positivism which teaches that exact science is man's only intellectual possession, and the position to which, in his later days, Comte exalted the emotions of man, the precepts of morality, and the mysterious observances of religion. Such was the view taken by M. Littré in France and by Mr. G. H. Lewes in this country. The course of human events leads us to the conclusion, that, to abandon Christianity for Positivism, is nothing else than to abandon Theism for Atheism.

To abandon Christianity for Positivism is to fall into Atheism.

## VIII.

HUMANITY IS NEITHER AN INTELLIGIBLE NOR A WORTHY OBJECT OF WORSHIP.

WHILST Christianity sets before us a Deity whose moral attributes, and especially whose

moral perfections, are so superior to our own, that it is obviously just that, if He exist, He should receive our adoration and homage,—Comte and his followers have nothing higher to offer us, as the object of our worship, than is to be found in our own human nature and qualities. Religious sentiment is to be directed towards men and women, with ordinary human characteristics. This amounts to nothing very different from the worship of ourselves!

The worship of humanity is virtually the worship of self.

Let us try to understand what is that Humanity which the Comtists propose as the Deity of the future and more enlightened generations of worshippers. When we make an attempt at definiteness, we find ourselves very much at a loss to know what we are to revere,—to what we are to offer our prayers. Strictly speaking, humanity is an abstraction, a notion under which we gather together those qualities which distinguish men from brutes. No doubt we shall be told to bring together just those attributes which command our respect or win our love. Still, after all, it is an abstraction,—with no existence outside our own thoughts. And how can we worship an abstraction? How can we trust, love, and serve an abstraction? Upon considering the Comtist deity, Dr. Mark Pattison came to the conclusion that by humanity we can only understand

The Humanity which the Comtists would put in the place of God has no existence save as a conception of our own minds.

"A mere word, an abstract term, the pure creation of the



logical faculty, of which we know that it never was or can be a real entity.”<sup>1</sup>

Others than Christian advocates have rejected with contempt or ridicule the proposal to set up Humanity as a God. Professor Huxley, satirizing the ecclesiastical pretensions of the founder of the Positivist religion, says:—

The utter unreality of the “being” thus offered as a substitute for the living God.

“Great was my perplexity, not to say disappointment, as I followed the progress of this mighty son of earth, in his work of reconstruction. Undoubtedly *Dieu* [God] disappeared, but the *Nouveau Grand-être Suprême* [the new, the Supreme great Being], a gigantic fetich, turned out brand-new by M. Comte’s own hands, reigned in his stead.”<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, Sir James Fitzjames Stephen, comparing Mr. Herbert Spencer’s Agnosticism with Mr. Frederic Harrison’s Positivist Religion, has said with point and with impartial severity:—

“Humanity with a capital H is neither better nor worse fitted to be a god, than the unknowable with a capital U.”<sup>3</sup>

Probably the Positivists worship individual human beings, dead or living.

In fact, it is necessary, in order that Humanity may have some plausibility as an object of worship, to personify the idea. When the French atheists deified the “Reason,” which they designed to replace the Christian God, they personified the attribute Reason, representing it in the person of a woman, whose character and reputation were not such as to inspire the respect of the virtuous. And the Comtists, there can be no doubt, instead

<sup>1</sup> *Contemporary Review*, March, 1876.    <sup>2</sup> *Lay Sermons*, p. 148.

<sup>3</sup> *Nineteenth Century*, June, 1884.

of adoring the abstraction Humanity, actually picture to themselves certain historical personages who command their admiration, and make, now this, now that, hero, saint, or sage, the object of their veneration.

Apart from such personification it does not seem consistent with reason and common-sense to worship Humanity. As well might we attempt to revere and love Mr. Matthew Arnold's "stream of tendency, not ourselves, which makes for righteousness." When Mr. Harrison affirms that "the sum of human effort in thought and act forms a current of power," we admit the justice of the statement, and the felicity of the figure. But when he proceeds to describe Humanity as "a composite human power," and, in his endeavour to be more definite, as "a being, an organism with every quality of organic life,"<sup>1</sup> we resent the transition from agreeable rhetoric to misty and misleading philosophy. Much of the language which the preacher of Positivism employs might indeed justly be applied to that Being who made man in His own image. Thus he speaks of

It seems scarcely possible to worship an abstraction.

"the ever present sense of a superior power controlling our lives, itself endowed with sympathies kindred to our own."

He adds:—

"The entire system of Positive belief points to the existence of a single dominant power, whose real and incontestable

<sup>1</sup> *Contemporary Review*, December, 1875.

attributes appeal directly to the affections, in no less measure than they appeal directly to the intellect."

Language is used by Positivists which would be appropriate if applied to God, but is meaningless if applied to Humanity.

Such language as this would be most appropriate from a Theist believing in a living, conscious, personal Ruler and Father of men. But it is mere inflated rhetoric in the mouth of a thinker who believes in no conscious and personal Power superior to what is human, and who regards the dead of former generations as the sovereigns who rule our spirits and deserve our adoration.

Sober reason cannot but acknowledge that the bulk of our fellow-creatures, living and dead, are very partially deserving of our admiration, and have no claim upon that religious veneration, which is appropriately rendered to a Being with moral perfections. Human virtues have existed in all states of society, but in how few characters have these virtues been impressively preponderant! We owe to our ancestors and predecessors much of good influence; but alas! not a little of evil. Reverence and gratitude may justly be felt towards some whose example has been found elevating and inspiring. But, on the other hand, there have been those of whose influence over ourselves we can think only with regret, even it may be with loathing and with shame.

If a selection is to be made of certain individuals who shall typify the true Humanity, who is to make such a selection, and upon what principle?

Men, generally speaking, have deserved a very qualified admiration; and few have deserved ordinary reverence.

Are we to worship the soldier or the saint, the emperor or the martyr, the missionary, the sage, or the poet? The type of character to this day admired by the multitude is often far from being such as would be approved by the intellectual, or the religious. Comte was aware of the difficulty in attempting to define the duly adorable Humanity: he was not successful in overcoming the difficulty. The "Calendar" is indeed a marvellous work, but it is noticeable that among its 500 names there do not occur any of those which are connected with the uprising of the enlightened intellect, the quickened heart of mankind against mediæval superstition. In vain do we look for such names as Wyclif, Savonarola, John Huss, Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Zwingli, Knox, Latimer. That such names are "conspicuous by their absence," is what we should expect, knowing Comte's prejudices against Protestantism. Whoever shall select the typical names will of necessity set before us only a partial representation of humanity. Whether the choice be arbitrary or rational, whether it be according to personal preference or to general conscience, the result cannot be other than unsatisfactory. The author of Positivism endeavoured to be at once comprehensive and eclectic.

Is a selection of heroes and saints, suitable for worship, to be made?

If so, who shall make the selection?

Comte unfairly excludes from his calendar many of the noblest, purest, and most useful of men.

"Humanity is not composed of all individuals or groups of men, past, present, and future, taken indiscriminately. The new great Being is formed by the co-operation only of such existences as are of a kindred nature with itself; excluding such

as have proved only a burden to the human race. It is on this ground that we regard Humanity as composed essentially of the dead.”<sup>1</sup>

Either the worshipper or the priest must by selection virtually determine and create the object of worship.

It is then admitted that Humanity as a whole, is not a suitable object of reverence and worship. The unworthy members of the race—the vast majority—must be put aside, and the choicest spirits, the few elect and precious, must be set apart and placed within the shrine for adoration. Now, upon what principle, by what faculty, by whose authority, shall that part of humanity be selected, to whom worship shall be offered? Comte himself acknowledged that no arbitrary principle is to be admitted, that the worthless and useless must be deliberately eliminated, and that the gold of humanity, liberated from the dross, must be praised and honoured as God. This is as much as to determine that either the worshipper or the priest must *make his God*, and must do this in the exercise of his own discrimination and judgment.

The Comtist, like the Papal Calendar, distracts the mind by the multiplicity of the saints whose claims it presents.

A practical difficulty in the so-called “Religion of Humanity,” arises from the multitude of objects proposed for worship. The Comtist calendar is crowded with names,—names of men illustrious in every field of research and achievement. The aim of its author was to present a kind of synopsis of humanity, and in this he may be credited with having partially succeeded. The prototype of this

<sup>1</sup> *Positive Polity*, vol. I., p. 333.



calendar is evidently the ecclesiastical calendar comprising the saints who have been canonized, in the course of successive centuries, by the Church of Rome. Let this diversity be compared with the unity of the object of worship revealed in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The Papal and the Positivist worship are alike distracting to the mind; all that can be said in their favour is this: that every character is sure to find something congenial in the multiplicity which is thus approved by worldly wisdom. Inconsistent and opposite qualities are alike honoured. On the other hand, the Bible exhibits One only and supreme object of veneration in the Divine Creator, moral Governor, and Redeemer, in whom no moral imperfection is to be found, and who combines in Himself all moral excellence. The worship of the living God brings into one focus all the spiritual aspirations of man, and leaves no room for aught to be added.

The immediate object of human worship is represented by Comte as being woman, especially in the person of mother, wife, and daughter. But worship must be of that which is above the worshipper. What guarantee is there that the worship of woman will be, in all or in most cases, the worship of the superior? It is not every man who can look up to his feminine relatives as models of human excellence, far less as incarnations of

The unity of the object of Christian worship exhibited in contrast to this diversity.

Woman, however admirable, is not a fitting object of religious worship.

Divine glory. It is not every woman whose worship will elevate her worshippers. Probably there may be in the world more very bad men than very bad women. But it is questionable whether the highest and finest models of moral excellence are to be found in the female sex. The worshipper of woman will, to a sensible man of experience, appear to be worshipping the creation of his own imagination, coloured by the soft delusive light of sentiment.

Woman-worship is indicative of sentimentality rather than of reason.

It is mainly to the religion of our Lord Christ that woman owes her elevation to her proper and Divinely appointed position in human society. The contrast between the regard in which women were held, and are still held, in unchristian communities, and the regard in which they are held where the Redeemer of our humanity bears rule, is striking indeed. But reasonable persons will not be blind to that tendency to sentimentalism, which is observable in religious society generally, and which is referable to a deep-seated principle in human nature. The worship of the Virgin Mary, so long and so extensively practised in Roman Catholic communities, however it may have been originally suggested by heathen usages, owes its popularity mainly to the power of sentimentality; and the Positivist doctrine concerning the worship of women, though traceable to Comte's personal temperament and experience, lays hold

upon a tendency of human nature which will not be, and ought not to be eradicated, but which certainly needs to be governed and controlled. It is not derogatory to women to say that, notwithstanding all their excellences and all their charms, they are but human; and that, because they are human, they are "compassed with infirmity," and are unsuitable as objects of supreme admiration and unqualified praise. The just object of religious veneration and service is a Being who combines in His character, and who transcends, the excellences which are deemed distinctively masculine and those which are deemed distinctively feminine. The inferiority of the worship of woman to the worship of God, is apparent to every one who believes that all human virtue is but the glimmering emanation from the goodness which is uncreated, eternal, and Divine.

The moral excellence of God transcends the highest human goodness, both masculine and feminine.

## IX.

### THE INCONSISTENCY OF POSITIVISM WITH TRUE PRAYER.

NOTHING is more obviously inadmissible than the Comtist teaching upon prayer. The founder of the "Religion of Humanity," and those of his followers who sympathize with the religious part of his teaching, lay the greatest stress upon the duty of devotion, and encourage direct addresses

Comtists offer prayer to the human race.

Such  
prayer is  
irrational,  
for it does  
not come  
before those  
to whom it  
is addressed.

On the  
other hand,  
prayer to  
the Creator  
and Saviour  
of mankind  
is just and  
elevating.

to the "Great Being," *i.e.*, to the human race as a whole. That this Deity is unconscious, is incapable of hearing the cry of suppliants, is neither pleased with honour rendered nor able to confer favours implored: this is unquestionable. We contend that prayer to such a Deity is irrational and meaningless. Better no prayer at all than that form of prayer which alone can be presented to "Humanity;" for the prayerless may be convinced of sin, whilst those who fancy that they pray when they invoke a shadow, an abstraction, a name, are certainly deluding and deceiving themselves.

The prayer which is enjoined and exemplified in Holy Writ is of a very different kind from any recommended by the Comtists. Christian prayer is offered to a Being personal, conscious, able by His very nature, disposed by His moral attributes, and pledged by His faithfulness, to enter into with sympathy, and to consider with wise kindness, the desires and requests of His people. That in saying thus much concerning God, we are making use of language based upon human experience, and adapted to human comprehension, we admit; but the language, though imperfect, is not unwarranted or misleading. Man is declared by the inspired apostle to be "the image and glory of God." Prayer is then offered by spiritual natures to that eternal and blessed Being who has made men capable of knowing, trusting, loving, and serving

Him. The Positivist theory forbids our attempting to conceive an almighty Author of our individual existence, an almighty Sovereign of our race ; and enjoins upon us the adoration of those who at the best are the "image," and the imperfect image, of the Infinitely Excellent. It seems to us, as Christians, more reasonable to believe that God "is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him." We have faith in One who, whilst "one generation passeth away, and another generation cometh," abides unchanged and unchangeable, who includes in His own person in glorious perfection those moral attributes which awaken our admiration, even when dimly reflected in the character of His creatures and subjects. As the Source of wisdom and goodness this Being may reasonably be invoked and entreated in prayer. But with regard to the memorable and illustrious dead, we cannot but perceive that what good it was in their power to do they have already done ; they have said all that it was given them to utter of inspiration and of counsel ; they have left their example and their influence behind, as a precious legacy to their successors. Commemorate their virtues we may and will ; implore their aid we cannot ; the one is the dictate of gratitude, the other would be the proof of infatuation. In fact the prayer of the Positivist is simply an unconscious witness to the heart's deep need, and an

Gratitude  
and rever-  
ence are  
within  
measure due  
to our  
fellow-men.

But  
unbounded  
adoration  
and affection  
are due to  
God our  
Saviour.



Sad is the case of those who must pray, but who are ignorant of the true and proper object of prayer.

inarticulate acknowledgment of the heart's yet deeper despair. Pray we must; but to whom shall he pray, for whom no God in His all-wise but inscrutable counsel sways the destinies of the nations, and in tenderness as mysterious watches over the child's uncertain steps? There remains for him nothing but the invocation of human pity and human helpfulness. Alas! for those who are doomed to experience how vain is the help of man, and who yet know not that God is "nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth."<sup>1</sup>

It is objected by Positivists that the prayers of Christians are selfish.

It is often urged by Positivists that the prayers of Christians are selfish, whilst their own devotions do not aim at securing personal advantages, but take the form of communion with and of aspiration towards the highest good. Now we contend that meditation upon moral excellence is more real and helpful in the case of those who believe in that excellence as eternally distinguishing the Being who is interested in and who presides over human affairs, and who is Himself concerned that His rational creatures should themselves partake and exhibit it. Whatever reflex advantages prayer to Humanity secures to the Positivist worshipper, are certainly enjoyed by the Christian. And the Christian reaps in his own heart and life the benefits of answered prayer. It is a great mistake

<sup>1</sup> Psalm cxlv. 18.

to suppose that to ask for, and to use means for obtaining blessings for ourselves, is the exercise of a selfish spirit. Selfishness is the habit of seeking good for ourselves without regard for others, at the expense of others, and with a view rather to our own enjoyment than with a view to the promotion of the welfare of mankind and the glory of God. If the Christian's prayer is selfish, then in the view of the enlightened and spiritual, it ceases in so far to be prayer at all. The essence of prayer is submission to the Divine Will, that Will which is the expression of righteousness, holiness, and benevolence. That God's kingdom may in some measure come through our agency, that God's glory may in some measure be promoted by our life,—this is the supreme and constant desire and hope of the Christian, and it is this that he embodies in his daily supplications. That the dross of human earthliness mingles with the fine gold of devotion, we all know from sad experience; but this—however the Comtist may be offended by the explanation—is because there is in our prayers too much of man, and not enough of God.

Prayer for the worshipper's own spiritual improvement and welfare, is not selfish.

The Christian is bound to seek, above all things, the glory of his God and Saviour.

## X.

THE MORAL AUTHORITY OF THE RELIGION OF  
HUMANITY IS INSUFFICIENT TO GUIDE AND  
GOVERN THE LIFE OF INDIVIDUALS AND  
COMMUNITIES.

Religion  
should not  
only reveal  
truth, but  
enjoin law,  
and exercise  
authority.

By common consent, religion, that it may deserve acceptance, must offer to men, not only a system of doctrines to be believed, but a law to be obeyed, with motives and sanctions sufficient, in some measure, to ensure the obedience enjoined. It is not an ornament to be worn, but a force to be obeyed. Mankind needs a religion that will "work," that will deal with a wilful, rebellious nature, with a life abounding in temptation, with a society prone to inflame passion and to enervate virtue. Religion, if it is to prove suitable for man, as man is, must come to him as to a sinner, must bring a remedy for man's moral disorder, succour for man's moral weakness, control for man's moral waywardness. It must not only reveal truth; it must impose and enforce law.

What shall  
be the  
rule of  
social life?

The  
Christian  
and the  
Comtist  
answers  
to this  
question.

In Comte's view, the Christian rule of social life, *Love your neighbour as yourself*, is a rule which distinctly sanctions egoism; and in *the love of God*—the ground of the rule—he finds a direct stimulus to egoism. He proposes instead, the formula, *Live for others*; but he qualifies this by

permitting men to gratify their personal instincts, with the view of fitting themselves to be better servants of humanity.<sup>1</sup>

The word "altruism" has been adopted into our language from the French tongue, which owes it to the inventive genius of Comte.<sup>2</sup> It is opposed to "egoism," and signifies the principle according to which a man lives, not for his own pleasure or good, but for the pleasure or good of others.

The  
"Religion  
of Human-  
ity" enjoins  
"Altruism."

Comte considered that he was the inaugurator of a new social era, a new social life. If there was one practical precept more frequently reiterated by him than another, it was that embodied in the above formula, "Live for others." The motto which the disciples have adopted from their master, and which they prefix to their publications, is,

The  
Comtean  
Motto.

*"Love as our principle, Order as our basis, Progress as our end."*

The true interpretation of altruism includes not merely a regard for our fellow-men, but a distinct ignoring of our Creator. It would be easy to show that a community in which every member of society should lose all thought and renounce all care of himself, would become utterly disorganized. Comte was very well aware of this; he knew that it is by the due combination of prudence with benevolence that human well-being

The  
necessity of  
combining  
prudence  
and  
benevolence.

<sup>1</sup> *Catechism*, p. 313.

<sup>2</sup> The word should have been "alienism," but "altruism" is now established by its adoption by Mr. Herbert Spencer and other well-known writers.

The  
superiority  
of the  
Christian  
over the  
Comtist  
law.

is secured. His vanity led him to exalt his own moral axioms above those accepted in Christendom. Yet an impartial student of religion and of morals cannot but regard the Christian law as superior to that of Comte. "*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, . . . and thy neighbour as thyself,*" is a wise and practical principle of human conduct; it presumes as natural and right a regard to our own interest, but directs us to make this regard the measure of our interest in our fellow-men. Eighteen centuries before Comte's day, Christ had inculcated the duty of unselfishness and benevolence. But whilst Comtism relies only upon the feeling of human community and sympathy as the motive power to compliance with its law, Christianity derives the love of man from the love of God, and supplies in the revelation of Divine compassion and mercy the spiritual impulse which is mighty to prompt man to benevolence. And experience has shown that there is no motive so efficacious to secure the prevalence of mutual love and helpfulness, as that arising from the pity of the heavenly Father and the sacrifice of the Divine Redeemer. He who is led by the faith he holds to cherish love to God feels the force of the admonition that, loving God, he shall love his brother also.

The  
superiority  
of the  
Christian  
motive.

With regard to the other clauses of the Positivist motto, it may be said that their unsatisfactory character is apparent at first sight, and that it is wonder-



ful how thoughtful men should accept them and glory in them. "Order as our basis, Progress as our end."

Comte distrusted all political revolution, and was reactionary in his approval of strong government.

The  
Comtist  
motto criti-  
cised.

His veneration for authority was such as to verge upon the admiration of absolutism. The basis of "order" was for him something very different

from the mutual respect which men should cherish for one another's rights. And how can "progress" be regarded as the "end"?

The language contradicts itself; for progress should be towards an end. Progress towards a good end is a desirable thing; the all-important question, which Comte

"Progress"  
is no proper  
"end."

does not answer, is this, In what direction, towards what goal, is progress to be made?

There is progress towards anarchy and atheism; and there is progress towards peace, freedom, righteousness, and piety. If the first be deemed retrogression

rather than progress, this should be stated, and the true end should be defined. There is none of this

vagueness in the prospect which is opened up, in the path which is prescribed, by the Christian revelation. The end there represented as worthy of all

The question  
is: to what  
end shall  
we seek  
to make  
progress?

human effort and sacrifice, is not mere progress, it is the reign of God, *i.e.*, the prevalence of justice and benevolence among men, based upon faith in a

perfect spiritual Ruler and Saviour, and introductory to the future and heavenly glory, to the city and the kingdom of God Himself.

The admonitions of Positivism are for the most part truisms, and in no sense peculiar to the system.

With these should be contrasted the deeply founded laws of the Christian Revelation.

The divine and practical power of Christianity.

The mottoes which have been so much vaunted by Positivists, *e.g.*, Live for others! Live openly! Let the strong devote themselves to the weak, and let the weak venerate the strong! The man must support the woman! etc., are very good as far as they go. But they are no revelations of Comtism. They are ethical truisms, and, what is of more importance, such precepts do not meet the necessities of human life. The world is not governed by mottoes. Christianity propounds a law, as the expression alike of the reason and the righteous will of the Author and Ruler of the universe. Christianity reveals a future life, and thus adds to the range and the solemnity of the moral outlook of mankind. Christianity makes known the interest of the Supreme Lord and Father of men in their spiritual state, His displeasure with sin, His desire to pardon, to purify, to bless. Christianity brings to bear upon the heart and conscience of human beings the mighty motive of love, enforced by gratitude and by hope; so that this motive becomes the spring of a new moral life, of a cheerful and enthusiastic obedience. Christianity reveals an all-perfect example, the example of Christ, and at the same time supplies needed power, the power of the Holy Spirit. In all this we have something very different from mottoes; we have principles whose efficient power is proved by ample experience. Positivism has no resources to

compare with these, no resources adequate to the necessities of the case. The witness of Sir J. F. Stephen, himself unfriendly to Christianity and apparently to all religion, may be accepted to the principle, supported by human experience, that the only religion which will work "must be founded upon a supernatural basis believed to be true."<sup>1</sup>

A supernatural basis necessary for religion and provided in Christianity.

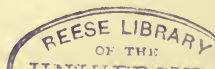
## XI.

"SUBJECTIVE" IMMORTALITY IS A POOR SUBSTITUTE FOR THE PERSONAL IMMORTALITY REVEALED BY CHRISTIANITY.

THE Positivist teaching with regard to immortality is, when compared with the teaching of the Lord Jesus and His apostles, very defective and unsatisfying. Whatever there is in it sound and good is equally the property of the Christian, who is the possessor at the same time of a glorious hope to which the Positivist is a stranger. Comte held that, inasmuch as the social existence of man consists in the continuous succession of the generations, the living are of necessity always under the government of the dead; conscious existence ceases at death, and each true servant of humanity, upon quitting this life, "exists only in the heart and intellect of others."

Comte's view of immortality is that it consists in the perpetuation of influence after death.

<sup>1</sup> *Nineteenth Century*, June, 1884.



“ This is the noble immortality, necessarily disconnected with the body, which Positivism allows the human soul. It preserves this valuable term—soul—to stand for the whole of our intellectual and moral functions, without involving any allusion to some supposed entity answering to the name.”<sup>1</sup>

Comte gives  
no hope of  
conscious  
and happy  
existence  
after this  
life.

Death dissipates man's bodily structure into its component elements; and, since the soul, according to Positivism, is but the function of organised matter, it ceases to be when the organism ceases to live. But the Comtist comforts himself with the assurance that a useful, devoted, and unselfish life cannot be without influence upon the future of that race which to him is the one object of supreme interest and affection. The doctrine offers no prospect of a life after death, to animate the self-denying toiler with the vision of fruit not to be reaped on earth,—to cheer the sufferer with the anticipation of relief and of repose. But it offers compensation for this loss in the assurance that every generation that does its work faithfully confers priceless benefits upon the generations which follow. Thus the individual may be said, when he has lost his personal existence, to live afresh in the higher and happier life of those who come after him, and who inherit the fruit of his work and sacrifice. A man, we are told, will prove himself more noble and less selfish, in cheerfully renouncing all thought, all desire, of personal, conscious immortality, when he has the conviction that his

He  
represents  
it as a  
high and  
unselfish  
aim to live  
for the  
benefit of  
posterity.

<sup>1</sup> *Catechism*, p. 77.

best purposes will be realised, and his best endeavours rewarded, in the purer and richer life of his successors.

"The old objective immortality," said Comte, "could never clear itself of the egoistic, or selfish, character."<sup>1</sup>

Let, then, this view of immortality be compared with the prospect revealed in the Scriptures, and cherished by every Christian.

There is nothing peculiar to Positivism in the belief that a good man's work endures after he himself has gone; that in this sense he lives on in the life of those who succeed him. This kind of immortality—if it may be so called—is the property of Comtist and of Christian alike; and it is very strange that it should be claimed by the former as his special revelation and possession. The consolation of contributing to the future well-being of humanity, is a just and worthy and real consolation to him who toils and suffers and waits, who seeks the good of his fellow-men, and often seeks it in weariness and amidst many discouragements and disappointments. The future of humanity is, however, a very different thing to the Christian and to the Positivist. To the former, mankind appears to occupy this earth for a period, as a tribe of sojourners or pilgrims seeking, and not in vain, a better country elsewhere. To the latter, mankind appears to have this earth as

The prospect of leaving good influence behind is common to the Christian with the Comtist.

A man's work abides, though the worker goes to his rest.

<sup>1</sup> *Catechism*, Preface, p. 33.



Positivism contemplates the extinction of the human race, body and soul, and the consequent annihilation of every good man's work.

Christianity opens up a boundless prospect of results as the harvest of toil.

its possession and its one and only home. The thoughtful man, however, will not forget that the race is no more immortal than the individual. He who believes in a future life may reasonably expect a golden and imperishable harvest in eternity. There is no limit, no end, to the beneficial results of a virtuous and self-denying course on earth. The new heaven and the new earth shall be the scene, and eternity shall afford the unlimited opportunity, of progress and of blessedness. But to the Positivist no such prospect opens up; to him the future has no such recompense, no such compensation in store. What then has he to look forward to? The development of earthly society, the prevalence among men of peace and amity, of plenty, of culture, of order. But the Positivist, as a man of science, knows that this planet will cease to be the dwelling-place of man, that our race will perish from off the earth. And this means *for him* the blankness of annihilation. To his apprehension, all shall in the future be as if knowledge and virtue and self-denial had never been!

The Christian has another advantage over the Positivist. Assured that his victorious Redeemer has "abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light by the Gospel," he has no gloomy expectation of extinction, but a bright hope of personal life in closer communion with the

ever-living God. This prospect he prizes—as he prizes the present life—not for an unworthy and merely selfish reason,—not as the prospect of pleasure made perpetual; but because there is thus opened up to him a future of unceasing devotion to the service of Him who is the highest and the best, and who has the first claim upon the love, the praise, the consecrated and loyal devotion of His people. The Master lives, and therefore the servant, the disciple, shall live also. The relation gives dignity and blessedness to the prospect of personal immortality. And with the evidence upon which this prospect rests, the Christian is abundantly and most reasonably satisfied.

In addition, Christianity assures us of that, of which Positivism gives no expectation, personal and conscious immortality.

## XII.

### THE RELIGION OF HUMANITY, AND THE RELIGION OF CHRIST.

IF these rival claimants to man's spiritual loyalty are to be compared, the comparison must not be between Positivism and such Christianity as Comte's wayward and prejudiced fancy constructed for the purpose of demolishing it. The appeal of Christ's followers and friends is to Christ's Word. It is necessary to refer to some of Comte's misconceptions and misrepresentations of our religion, for they have been too generally

Comte's misrepresentations of the religion of Christ.

accepted by those who know little at first hand of the Inspired Volume.

Comte regarded Christianity as only concerned with the unseen; whereas the Incarnate Son of God makes the invisible visible.

Comte's enmity towards Christianity was inspired, partly by a dislike to its fundamental revelation of a superhuman Being, the Ruler of the universe, and partly by a misunderstanding of the character of our religion. He objected to it, because in his view it represented

"perfection as consisting in an entire concentration upon heavenly objects ;"

He looked on Christianity as opposed to benevolence; whereas sin is a departure from the ideal nature which comprises love.

an objection which overlooks the great Christian doctrine of the Incarnation, a doctrine which makes it possible for us to realize, and so to admire and revere, the moral attributes of the Supreme as manifested under the conditions of a human character and a human life. He condemned

"a morality which proclaims that the benevolent sentiments are foreign to our nature ;"

He thought that Scripture treated labour as in itself a curse; whereas it is sin which renders labour a penalty.

whereas the truth is that the Scriptures represent malice and hatred as forms of sin, and sin as a departure from the proper and Divinely constituted nature of man. He complained that Christianity

"so little understands the dignity of labour as to refer its origin to a Divine curse ;"

which is in contradiction to the Biblical statement that the Creator placed unfallen Adam in the garden "to dress it and to keep it," and that his sin was the occasion not of labour in itself being cursed, but of labour in the new conditions that

arose partaking of the penalties attaching to man's disobedience. He describes our religion

"as putting forward woman as the source of all evil ;"

whereas the narrative in Genesis represents the man as equally guilty with the woman in violating Divine law, whilst no book in the world has done so much as the Bible to elevate the position of woman, and to strengthen her moral influence amongst mankind. Comte held that Christians

Revelation does not regard woman as the source of all evil. In the fall, man and woman were both guilty, and Christianity has done much to elevate woman.

"pursue no good, however trifling, but from the hope of an infinite reward, or from the fear of an eternal punishment," thus "proving their heart to be as degraded as their intellect."

In this misrepresentation the master has been commonly followed by his disciples. Yet both Old and New Testament rely upon the love, the gratitude, the spiritual sympathy, cherished towards the God and Saviour of mankind by those who accept the message of Divine authority and mercy, as the most powerful motives to well-doing. A regard to personal welfare and happiness, though not the highest principle of obedience, is yet a lawful and proper principle, and it is not the fault of true religion that many of its expositors have lost sight of the purest and best motives, and have laid an undue stress upon those which have right only to a subordinate place. No system of morality, intended for men as they are, can al-

Hope and fear are not the main motives to Christian faith and obedience. Love and gratitude towards a Divine Saviour are the all constraining power of the Christian life.

together dispense with the consideration of the consequences of actions. But the more Christians are penetrated with the distinctively Christian spirit, the less will they act aright from motives of hope and of fear, the more will they be actuated by the impulses of duty, of loyalty, and of love.

The defects and errors involved in the principles of the Positivist system.

Positivism cannot clearly distinguish between the worshipper and the Deity, for both alike are human. The object of adoration does not actually exist; it has had a partial existence in the past, it is to have a completer existence in the future. Meanwhile the devotee is to assist in the growth, the construction of his god.

Positivism discerns in man no truly spiritual nature. The phenomenal only can be known, and the phenomenal has no lasting existence. All that is human is physical, mortal, perishable.

Positivism recognizes no law independent of human origin, no eternal, unchangeable government and authority, superior to the generations of mankind which come and which pass away. Humanity is making a law as it is making a God; and that which is made is inferior to its maker.

Positivism knows nothing of sin; for it recognises in man no Divine image which has been defaced, it admits of no Divine standard from which man has deflected, it knows no Divine authority which has been defied. Upon vice and crime, indeed, it looks with detestation, as injurious



to the happiness of the individual and to the peace and order of society. But *sin* it is from its very position and principles unable to comprehend; for sin is against God, and the "Religion of Humanity" ignores and denies God. If man owes no allegiance to a Supreme Power, he cannot rebel.

Positivism is ignorant of redemption; for if there is no sin, there can be no need and no possibility of salvation. On the assumption that God is not, the mercy, the pity, the love,—which Christians believe have provided a Saviour,—vanish and become mere fancies and illusions. For the Positivist there can be no such thing as Divine forgiveness, as restoration to Divine favour, as participation in Divine life.

Depriving mankind of the Redeemer and of the blessed fruits of His redemption, the system now under discussion leaves the world poor, desolate, and hopeless indeed!

Positivism unfolds no reason, no substantial and sufficient motive for a virtuous life. There is no Divine purpose, and no imperishable aim to be sought and secured by self-denial and beneficence. The alternative in human conduct is simply between the temporary happiness of one person and that of another, and it is not clear why the agent should prefer another's happiness to his own.

Positivism restricts our regards within the horizon of earth and of time, *i.e.*, such a period as com-

It mis-  
represents  
both God  
and man;  
it abolishes  
Divine law;  
it ignores  
human sin;  
it deprives  
us of the  
great  
salvation;  
it weakens  
the motives  
to virtue;  
it limits our  
prospects to  
this present  
life.

prises man's tenancy of this perishable planet. Beyond, it offers no prospect for either the individual or the race; no scope for future recompense, retribution, or development.

In every respect the Religion of Christ has advantage over the so-called religion of Humanity.

Does Christianity take a less noble view than Positivism of human nature, as created by God, and as re-created in Christ by the Spirit of God? On the contrary, the Scriptures assure us that "God created man in *His own image*," and "made him *but little lower than God*,"<sup>1</sup> that "there is a spirit in man, and the breath of the Almighty giveth them understanding." Christianity confers upon our nature the highest honour, for its central truth is that the eternal Word became "*the Son of Man*," that He might redeem and save the nature which He deigned to share.

In its view of human nature.

In its view of morality, and of man's moral and spiritual necessities.

Does Christianity come short of Positivism in its view of the highest law of righteousness, the highest possibilities of moral character, the highest motives to self-denial, to true service? On the contrary, the Bible reveals to us in God the attributes whose harmonious action constitutes moral goodness, and the Being who, as the Almighty and Eternal Ruler, secures the final triumph of the cause of righteousness. And the Bible reveals to us in Christ the Divine Saviour, whose cross is the condemnation of sin and the salvation of the sinner, whose love

In its provision of salvation.

<sup>1</sup> Revised Version.

is the principle, and whose Spirit is the power of the new and higher life of humanity.

Does Christianity take a less inspiring and satisfying view than Positivism of the prospects of humanity? On the contrary, it bids us look forward to the time when it shall be said, "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign for ever and ever." The "Religion of Humanity" may promise the virtuous and the wise a name in the Comtist calendar, a niche in the Positivist temple; but Christianity permits us to believe of the sainted and the glorified that "they are equal unto the angels, and are sons of God," and encourages the devout and faithful to breathe to Heaven the aspiration, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness." The brightest hope of the Positivist is in the spread of civilisation, the reign of order, and the prevalence of peace on earth. In this hope the Christian joins. But the time shall come when the earth and the heavens shall be rolled up as a mantle, and shall be changed as a garment. With that time, in the gloomy apprehension of the Positivist, shall perish and pass away, together with this material dwelling-place, those natures that make it their brief, their only home; and man, with all his works and all his knowledge, and all his virtues, shall be swept into eternal oblivion. But with that time, according to

In its anticipation of the future of Humanity even on earth.

The limited horizon of Positivism.

The glorious  
revelation  
which  
Christianity  
gives of the  
everlasting  
destiny of  
the saved.

the strong and well-founded hope of the Christian, shall appear "the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness;" and then shall be fulfilled the prayer offered for His people by Him who is the Head of the new and immortal humanity, "Father, I will that where I am they also may be with Me, that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me; for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world."



THE  
ETHICS OF EVOLUTION  
EXAMINED.

BY THE  
REV. JAMES IVERACH, M.A.,

AUTHOR OF  
‘IS GOD KNOWABLE?’ “THE PHILOSOPHY OF MR. HERBERT SPENCER EXAMINED.”



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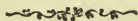


## Argument of the Tract.

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MR. HERBERT SPENCER taken as the exponent of the Ethics of Evolution. His statement of the question. The new aspect given to Ethics by Evolution. Criticism of Mr. Spencer's account of the genesis of moral intuition. It fails to account for the influence of education, and for the inheritance of mankind embodied in literature. Man is a being possessed of freedom, and any view of morality must have regard to this fact. Mr. Spencer's use of words of different moral import as if they were synonymous. Beneficial, good, pleasurable, are identified by him, as also are detrimental, bad, painful. Fallacy involved in this procedure. Impossibility of deducing laws of conduct from laws of life and conditions of existence. Criteria of moral conduct. Evolved conduct may be good or evil. Industrialism affords no criterion of the morality of conduct. Moral obligation. Veracity as the test whereby we may try the validity of the hypothesis of the Ethics of Evolution. Impossibility of accounting for the binding obligation to be truthful on any Utilitarian hypothesis. Mr. Spencer's prophecy that "the element in the moral consciousness which is expressed by the word obligation will disappear." Criticism of it. Mr. Spencer's distinction between absolute and relative Ethics misleading. Failure of Evolutionary Ethics to afford guidance to man. Christ's life and teaching the sure guide of man to real moral conduct. Christian Ethics the only scientific Ethics.

# THE ETHICS OF EVOLUTION EXAMINED.



THE latest outgrowth of the theory of Evolution is found in the Ethics it has sought to formulate. Many writers are in the field, but by common consent the

Mr.  
Spencer's  
statement  
of the  
genesis of  
moral  
intuitions

greatest of them is Mr. Herbert Spencer. His writings are most referred to, his name has most authority among Evolutionists, and we shall limit ourselves to his writings.

We begin by quoting from him a statement which sets forth in few words the method by which evolution seeks to explain morality. We make this quotation, as it is well to have at the outset a definite view of the matter with which we have to deal.

“To make my position fully understood, it seems needful to add that, corresponding to the fundamental propositions of a developed moral science, there have been and still are, developing in the race, certain fundamental moral intuitions; and that, though these moral intuitions are the results of accumulated experiences of Utility, gradually organised and inherited, they have come to be quite independent of conscious experience. Just in the same way that I believe the intuition of space to have arisen from organised and consolidated experiences of all antecedent individuals, who bequeathed to him their slowly-developed nervous organizations,—just as I believe that this intuition, requiring only to be made definite by personal experi-

ence, has practically become a form of thought, apparently quite independent of experience ; so do I believe that the experiences of utility, organized and consolidated through all past generations of the human race, have been producing corresponding nervous modifications, which, by continued transmission and accumulation, have become in us certain faculties of moral intuition, certain emotions corresponding to right and wrong conduct, which have no apparent basis in the individual experiences of utility. I also hold that just as the *space-intuition* responds to the exact demonstrations of Geometry, and has its rough conclusions interpreted and verified by them ; so will moral intuitions respond to the demonstrations of moral science, and will have their rough conclusions interpreted and verified by them.”<sup>1</sup>

Admission  
that man  
has now an  
intuitive  
knowledge  
of truth.

We take note of the concession here made by Mr. Spencer, because it marks the end of a long controversy, if from another point of view it marks the beginning of a new one. We have it here admitted that man has an intuition of truth, truth which is recognised as true as soon as it is understood. What origin soever the intuition may have had, it is conceded that now and here for the individual there are truths of intuition, both mathematical and moral. This is a distinct gain, and an advance on the old assertion that worlds may exist where two and two might make five. Still, we must not make too much of the admission, for it is often the habit of Mr. Spencer to take away with the one hand what he concedes with the other. The old controversy was whether custom and association could account for, and explain the intuitions of the mind. The old answer was Yes,

The old  
controversy.

<sup>1</sup> *Data of Ethics*, p. 123,

and students of the history of philosophy will readily recall to mind the various attempts to show that the laws of association could account for experience. To the same question Mr. Spencer and Mr. Lewes, and evolutionists in general, answer both No and Yes. They answer that if you have regard only to the individual, then it is conceded that he has forms of thought and faculties of moral intuition which have no apparent basis in individual experience, and are apparently quite independent of it. But they answer that if you have regard to the race, if you widen the meaning of custom and association, to embrace the whole history of life, then these can account for all the beliefs of man, both those which are fundamental and also those which are less fundamental. Truths which are now forms of thought, truths which are *a priori* to the individual, are *a posteriori* to the race.

The truth intuitively known *a priori* to the individual but *a posteriori* to the race, according to Mr. Spencer.

The concession made to intuition is thus more apparent than real. An intuition is only custom made inveterate. It is only an association of facts or ideas which, from frequent repetitions, has become inseparable. Obviously the former controversy has been begun anew, and the issues are greater than before. Hume's position was that all knowledge is the outgrowth of sensation; the position of Spencer is different only in the fact that he demands a longer time for sensations to cluster themselves together, and to elevate them-

The concession more apparent than real.

selves into faculties of intuition. It will be well to inquire into the possibility of this transformation.

"I also hold," says Mr. Spencer, in the passage already quoted, "that as the space-intuition responds to the exact demonstrations of geometry, and has its rough conclusions interpreted and verified by them."

The space-intuition fundamental, and without its constant use geometry cannot proceed.

What precise meaning is attached by Mr. Spencer to these words it is difficult to say. It is certain, however, that the procedure of geometry is the exact opposite of what he describes. In every geometrical demonstration appeal is made to, and the verification is supplied by the space-intuition, whose "rough conclusions" he thinks require verification. This is an illustration of a confusion of thought which constantly recurs in the writings of Mr. Spencer. It appears most frequently as an inability to distinguish between things that differ. Nothing is more common with him than to accumulate as proof of a certain proposition a number of particulars which have no common principle, and have no common bearing on the point the truth of which has to be established. In the case before us there is a sense in which the rough conclusions of the space-intuition have to be verified by the exact demonstrations of geometry. These, however, refer only to actual matters, such as the shape, size, distance, and other quantitative relations of the different objects which are within our view. But even the determination of these presuppose the space-intuition geometry is supposed

The sense in which the conclusions of the space-intuition have to be verified by the exact demonstrations of geometry.



to verify. The space-intuition which emerges as the consummation at the end of a process, is of such an indispensable nature, that without it the process could not have begun. Geometricians assume the space-intuition, they work from it, they appeal to it at every stage of their demonstrations, and this intuition has such authority, that a singular act of perception, presentative or representative, is sufficient to establish the validity of the truth thus intuitively seen, as a universal truth, true everywhere and always. In this sphere one presentation is equal to a thousand ; our conviction of the validity of intuitive truth, at the very first presentation of it to our minds, is so strong that increased experience does not make it stronger. The space-intuition has no need of verification, it verifies itself, and it is the touchstone of the truth of geometrical demonstration.

Authoritative nature of intuitive truth.

Experience is possible because we have intuitions, and every experience, however slight, presupposes the intuition, which, by the theory of Mr. Spencer, emerges as the result of the experience. It is remarkable also, that the procedure of Mr. Spencer himself corresponds exactly with the usual procedure of geometricians. The first chapter of his *Psychology* is entitled "A Datum Wanted," and the second is called "The Universal Postulate," which is thus expressed, "a belief which is proved by the inconceivableness of its negation to invariably

Experience possible because of intuitions.

Mr. Spencer's system of philosophy is based on intuitions.

exist is true." It is curious to find that the universal postulate is an intuition; on it he bases all his reasoning, and he regards his reasoning as gaining in cogency in proportion as he can make direct and immediate use of the postulate. Without the postulate he cannot move a step, or draw an inference. Grant him the datum, and he can move onwards to complete the great structure of his philosophy. Refuse to grant him the validity of his datum, or the sufficiency of his postulate, and he is powerless. In the case of Mr. Spencer, too, the experience philosophy is based on intuition.

Attempt of  
Mr.  
Spencer to  
trace the  
genesis of  
intuitions.

No doubt he proceeds immediately to show how the universal postulate has been obtained, and we have from his pen a number of chapters of special analysis, of general synthesis, and special synthesis, in which he endeavours to describe the genesis of special intuitions, as well as the genesis of that intuition which he describes as the universal postulate. But for that genesis the universal postulate is needed even at the starting-point, and it is needed at every stage of the process. We ask again how we can conceive of a universal postulate which is needed at every stage, and yet is itself the product of the process which it governs all along? If it can be shown that the simplest experience is impossible if we do not possess these ideas beforehand, then the argument that intuition is the product of experience falls to the ground. Reduce experience

to its simplest elements, yet whenever there emerges a state of consciousness, there are already present those intuitions which form at once the basis and the test of valid experience. It is unnecessary to dwell further on this point, on which so much has been written since the time of Kant. We pass on to our proper subject, and we propose to examine Mr. Spencer's account of the genesis of moral intuition.

Mr. Spencer's account of the genesis of moral intuition.

It is well to have clearly before our minds the fundamental assumption made by Mr. Spencer. It is

“that the experiences of utility, organised and consolidated through all past generations of the human race, have been producing corresponding nervous modifications, which, by continued transmission and accumulation, have become in us certain faculties of moral intuition, certain emotions responding to right and wrong conduct, which have no apparent basis in the individual experiences of utility.”

Concentrating our attention on the central part of this statement, we look steadfastly at what is involved in it. Put nakedly it stands thus, “nervous modifications have become faculties of moral intuition.” Mr. Spencer has certainly the courage of his convictions, and in this startling proposition has placed boldly before his readers what is implied in his system. The sentence passes at a bound from the outer world of matter to the inmost centre of self-conscious life and thought, and in a bold synthesis identifies the two. In the sentence is gathered up the result of all the work of Mr.

Nervous modifications cannot become faculties of moral intuition.

Spencer. Here a nervous organisation, which has somehow arisen, grown, accumulated to itself increments and modifications; there in the end faculties of moral intuition. We might have forgotten, in the long process of perusing the voluminous works of Mr. Spencer, the identity of nervous modification with faculties of moral intuition, had he not in kindness placed them side by side. The identification of the two sets us to examine the process by which they are identified.

The theory fails when brought face to face with patent facts.

The theory receives a fatal shock as soon as it is brought face to face with facts which are apparent to every one. I have received from my ancestors a nervous organisation, modified and enriched by all the experience through which they have passed. They have bequeathed to me this inheritance, and my nervous organisation is such as to have born with it faculties of moral intuition. Compared with the immense period during which this nervous organism has been used, the time during which I can use it is very brief indeed, and the modifications which can be made in it by me must be very slight in comparison. Yet, on the contrary, the fact stands thus, recognised as conspicuously by Mr. Spencer as by any other writer on education, that the modifications introduced into character by education, in the comprehensive sense of that word, are infinitely more important than those we have received by inheritance. At all

It fails to account for the growth of character in a man's lifetime by evolution.

events, it will be admitted by all that education, the training of the family, the discipline of the school, and the influence of social life, are elements in the formation of character whose importance cannot be over-rated. Where are the nervous modifications to correspond with these changes in the human character produced by education? They are not to be found.

Nor do nervous modifications represent all that I have received from the past, any more than they can represent all I receive from day to day in the present. If they did, I should be limited to that share in the universal inheritance which my immediate ancestors have been able to acquire and to bequeath to me. What they were, that I would be, with only an infinitesimal change in some direction. Nervous modification is a costly and a slow process—too costly and slow to fit me for my life-work. Humanity is thrifty, and has found out a more excellent way. It has found out other and less expensive ways of registering its higher experiences. Literature, art, science, the recorded thoughts, feelings, and deeds of mankind are not limited by the nervous organisations which each generation has bequeathed to its successors. And to-day my inheritance includes the achievement of inspired writers like Moses and Isaiah, the thoughts of philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, the songs of poets like Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare. In

It fails to account for the inheritance of man, received independent of and apart from nervous modifications.

What the inheritance includes.



a word, all that has been done by humanity has become mine, whether my ancestors have had or had not that particular nervous modification which might be held to correspond to the *Republic* of Plato, or the *Principia* of Newton. The first objection therefore to be taken to Mr. Spencer's view is, that it can neither account for the influence of education, nor for the inheritance of the past.

There is no proof that nervous modifications accompany mental and moral development.

It implies also that for every great thought, or lofty imagination, or holy feeling, there is a corresponding nervous modification. From the nature of the case no proof of this can be given, nor can there be any proof of the other assumption, that nervous modifications have preceded or accompanied mental and moral development in the past. This has been put so well by Dr. Martineau, that we venture to borrow the statement of it:—

No exact correspondence between the moral and the physical.

“The fact is, that the evolution theory rests mainly upon the evidence of *organisms*; and when they have been duly disposed in the probable order of their development, their animating instincts and functional actions are obliged, it is supposed, to follow suite; and it is therefore taken for granted rather than shown, that by a parallel internal history, the most rudimentary animal tendencies have transmuted themselves into the attributes of a moral and spiritual nature. But the essential difference between the two cases must not be overlooked. The crust of the earth preserves in its strata the memorials of living structure, in an order which cannot be mistaken, enabling us to associate the types that co-exist, and to arrange those which are successive; and, in spite of the missing links of the series, to observe the traces of a clear ascent, the higher forms making their first appearance after the ruder. The archæology of nature is in this respect perfectly analogous to that of history; and supplies a chain of relative dates with as much certainty as

the coins disinterred at different dates, and of graduated workmanship from the ruins of a buried empire. But just as, in this case, the image and superscription report to you only the place and time of the Cæsar they represent, but tell you nothing of his character and will ; so in the other, the fossil organ is silent about the passion that stirred it, the instinct that directed it, the precise range and kind of consciousness which belonged to its possessor. In other words you have, and can have, no record of psychological relations, in correspondence with the hierarchy of forms ; for you cannot get into the consciousness of other creatures ; and if, in order to find room for educing the moral affections from what is unmoral, you begin with our præhuman progenitors, and take their private biography in hand, and catch their first inklings of what is going to be conscience, you are simply fitting a picture to your own preconception. To a certain extent there is, no doubt, a definite and known relation between structure and function in animals, enabling you from the presence of the one to know the other. The wing, the fin, the legs, reveal the element and the habit of a creature's life ; the jaw, the teeth, the condyles for the connected muscles, disclose his food-appetite, and his modes both of pursuit and of self-defence. But long before we reach the problem which engages us we come to the end of this line of inference. There are no bones or muscles or feathers appropriated to the exclusive use of self-love ; no additional eye or limb set apart for the service of benevolence ; no judicial wig adhering to the head that owns a conscience ; so that, in this field, *i.e.*, through the whole scene of the moral phenomena, no help can be had from the zoological record. Nothing can be more chimerical than præ-historical psychology."<sup>1</sup>

Neither  
conscience  
nor any  
of our  
higher  
feelings has  
any physical  
organ.

It is confessedly difficult to set forth all that is implied in the notion of heredity, or to assign limits to what may or may not be transmitted to us from our ancestors. At the same time, it is not difficult to see that the equation between nervous modifications and faculties of moral intuition which Mr. Spencer endeavours to establish cannot hold

<sup>1</sup> *Types of Ethical Theory*, vol. ii., pp. 340, 341

Pleasure is evanescent, and its results are limited to the nervous organism.

true. The experiences of utility which are spoken of, are experiences of pleasure, and it is not explained how pleasurable experiences can be organised or consolidated. For a pleasurable feeling is an evanescent state; it was, and is not. In the moment of fruition it ceases to be, and the effect of pleasure on the nervous system is to produce a change in its structure. The utmost result of pleasure in relation to the nervous system is to produce a momentary change or modification, more or less great. And what is transmitted is the nervous organisation thus modified. It is a gratuitous assumption, that along with the changed nervous system thus transmitted, there are transmitted also the feelings and experiences which originally gave rise to, and accompanied these changes of structure. But nervous structure remains nervous structure from first to last, and how great soever may have been their modifications, and however numerous the generations through which they have been transmitted, they are in the end nervous modifications and nothing more. The nervous system, however, plays a large part in the system of Mr. Spencer. Modifications in its structure are by him held to account for all the modifications of mind. He has not shown how this is possible as a matter of philosophy, nor has he been able to show that it is a matter of fact. He has shown, on the contrary, that changes in the nervous organism are

All nervous changes are accounted for and expressed in physical terms in Mr. Spencer's system.

physical changes to be accounted for and explained by physical causes alone, and may be described in physical terms alone, without reference to any such thing as feeling or consciousness. For feeling is, on his theory, something gratuitous, something inexplicably added to the physical changes of the nervous structure. And yet Mr. Spencer holds the correlation to be so close, that he can afford to make the physical changes of the nervous system a register of the growth of spirit, and an explanation of the highest attainments of spirit. Consciousness for him begins with a nervous shock, and every increase of faculty is accompanied by or caused by a more complicated shock until the faculty of moral intention emerges as the result of this series of nervous shocks. One would naturally have supposed that this had been made out of a series of demonstrations founded on the examination of nervous structures in the various stages of their development. At one stage a nervous system ought to be shown us at the very time when consciousness began, and that added modification ought to be pointed out which caused consciousness to be. Other modifications, corresponding to the growth of experience, and to separate faculties, memory, hope, imagination, reason, until at last moral intuition stands forth with its appropriate nervous modification. Mr. Spencer's theory assumes that a series of correlations can thus be made out. It remains an assumption, and nothing more.

Feeling,  
according to  
Mr. Spencer,  
something  
gratuitous.

His con-  
ception of  
conscious-  
ness.

Mr.  
Spencer's  
theory an  
assumption  
and nothing  
more.



Mr.  
Spencer's  
view of  
man.

A consequence of this assumption is that Mr. Spencer is constrained to look on man as an aggregate of feelings, which feelings are again dependent utterly on the nervous organism. As Lange has pointed out, it remains true that if all the consequences of Darwinism are granted, the conscious life of man remains still a problem which requires special treatment. With Mr. Spencer, however, the problem of ethics is sought to be solved by reference to methods which have been found adequate in lower spheres of life. He is constrained to reject the conception of freedom, and to treat it as an illusion. The illusion arises from the belief

“that at each moment the *ego* present as such in consciousness is something more than the aggregate of feelings and ideas which then exist.”

His incon-  
sistency

We have always criticised the psychological bearings and implications of this statement.<sup>1</sup> We now look at it in its bearing on the problem of ethics. All mankind have fallen into the strange illusion of supposing themselves to be something more than their “feelings and ideas.” Even Mr. Spencer is no exception to the rule; at all events, he is in the constant habit of using language which is meaningless, unless he is something more than the aggregate of ideas and emotions existent for the time. Supposing, however, that the *ego* is this aggregate

<sup>1</sup> Present Day Tract, No. 29: *The Philosophy of Mr. Herbert Spencer Examined*, pp. 13-28.



and nothing more, how does the further illusion of freedom arise? We get, it seems, into the habit of speaking of ourselves as if we were something separate from the group of psychical states which constitute the action, and we fall into the error of supposing that it was not the impulse alone which determined the action. Causality does not, it appears, belong to the ego, but to a particular feeling, idea, or impulse. How a consciousness of self can have arisen at all on Mr. Spencer's terms is not evident. How a consciousness of the freedom of self could have arisen is even more mysterious. For if the connection between feelings and actions be what Mr. Spencer describes it, then the inference for the consciousness to draw is, that the will is necessitated. The puzzle is hopeless. How came this ego to have its place in consciousness? How could a bundle of conscious states impose on the "aggregate," that it was something apart from the aggregate, and could cause changes in it? Well, if this be an explanation of the illusion of freedom, the explanation is more mysterious than the fact.

Supposition  
of unrelated  
feelings as  
causes.

If a desirable state of feeling be the aim of conduct, as Mr. Spencer affirms, then it may be remarked that when it is so, I look forward to that state as mine. I look forward, and see myself in the state in which I desire to be; and if my action is determined by it, this follows, not from an impulse which

Mr.  
Spencer's  
affirmation  
as to the  
aim of  
conduct.

An aim is intelligible only when viewed in relation to the conception of self.

singly and alone produces its own consequence, but from the impulse as ruled by the conception of self. The self is conceived as now existent, as persistent through changes of state, and as existent in the desirable state of feeling which it foresaw and strove after. Mr. Spencer assumes this as true, though in terms he denies it. He cannot get rid of the conception of self. For it is through this conception that every pleasure has the possibility of becoming a personal good. Pleasure is not the end, but the satisfaction of self by means of the pleasure. The consciousness of self originated the act, persists through the act, and the series of results set in motion by the act, and bears with it the knowledge that the act and its consequences are due to him, and he is responsible for them. A mere abstract state of desirable feeling, without relation to the self which accompanies and constitutes it in reference to an object, is one of the wonderful things which meet us in the philosophy of Mr. Spencer.

Mr. Spencer's statement of the problem of moral science.

The problem of ethics becomes very complicated indeed in the assumption, that an aggregate of feelings and ideas can attain to morality. But Mr. Spencer contrives to get on, and the first step he takes is to change the nature of the problem.

"The view for which I contend is, that morality properly so called—the science of right conduct—has for its object to determine *how* and *why* certain modes of conduct are detrimental, and certain other modes beneficial. These good and

bad results cannot be accidental, but must be necessary consequences of the constitution of things, and I conceive it to be the business of moral science to deduce, from the laws of life and the conditions of existence, what kinds of action necessarily tend to produce happiness, and what kind to produce unhappiness. Having done this, its deductions are to be recognised as laws of conduct, and are to be conformed to irrespective of a direct estimation of happiness and misery."—*Data of Ethics*, p. 57.<sup>1</sup>

Waiving altogether the difficulties which Mr. Spencer's doctrine of the ego raises against his statement of the business of moral science, we shall look at the statement in itself. Suppose we come to the *Data of Ethics* for guidance as to the rules of conduct. What is right conduct? And the answer we receive is, that we ought to find out *how* and *why* certain modes of conduct are detrimental, and certain other modes are beneficial. Such information, supposing it possible to obtain it, would not be without its use. It pre-supposes, however, that we have made a tabulated account of the results of conduct; and have been able to set them down as beneficial or the reverse. In addition, it pre-supposes that we have advanced so far as to have got a satisfactory theory of *how* and *why* these results have their respective charac-

Is there any guidance for conduct on these terms?

Impossibility of making a tabulated account of the results of conduct.

<sup>1</sup> It would be an instructive exercise to substitute for the language used by Mr. Spencer, the language he uses when speaking of the ego. It would run in something like the following fashion: "The view for which the aggregate of feelings and ideas which now exists, and is called Mr. Spencer, contends." We have tried to do it, but the result is too grotesque to pursue it any further.

Identifica-  
tion of the  
beneficial,  
the good,  
and the  
pleasure-  
able; also  
of the de-  
trimental,  
the bad, and  
the painful  
by Mr.  
Spencer.

teristics. Our knowledge of the laws of life and the conditions of existence is supposed to be sufficiently extensive and exact to warrant us in drawing inferences worthy to be accepted as a guide to right living. All this is a preliminary to real moral guidance. For it is to be observed that when we have accomplished this heavy task, we have not yet arrived at a distinction which involves anything moral: we have only reached what is described as what is beneficial and detrimental. How are we to cross the boundary, and reach the region where moral distinctions obtain? Mr. Spencer does not seem to suspect the existence of a boundary. In the next sentence he quietly substitutes the words "good" and "evil" for beneficial and detrimental. We are aware that to him they are identical. All the same, however, he is by no means unwilling to receive the help to his argument which the moral meaning of the new words brings to it. Translating the new words back into their Spencerian equivalents, it is obvious that his argument makes no advance. We have still another substitution of terms to notice in this characteristic paragraph. Good and evil are again dropt out, and we have instead "the kinds of action which necessarily tend to produce happiness or unhappiness." Beneficial, good, pleasurable, detrimental, bad, painful, are interchanged, as if synonymous. No doubt they are so in the new ethics of Mr. Spencer. They

Ethics  
not a  
system  
which sets  
forth our  
pleasures  
and advan-  
tages.

are not so, however, in the ordinary use of language, nor in the moral consciousness of man. The ethics of Mr. Spencer can at the best be a system which sets forth our pleasures and advantages. It does not touch the margin of the higher region which answers to the call of duty, and feels the binding obligation of righteousness, truth, and goodness.

It is not to the purpose here to enter on a discussion of Utilitarianism in any of the forms it has lately assumed. Guidance by pleasures and pains has been abundantly shown by many writers, from different points of view, to be inapplicable to human beings. What we purpose to show here is, that the theory of evolution has not obviated the objections brought against Hedonism; and it has brought fresh difficulties of its own. We may be permitted here to refer to the able and thorough discussion of this subject by Mr. Sorley.<sup>1</sup> He has pointed out that the development of life does not always tend to increase pleasure, and the laws of its development cannot be safely adopted as maxims for the attainment of pleasure. He has shown also that it is impossible for us to say—

Does evolution help Hedonism?

Development of life does not tend to increase pleasure. ✓

“what kinds of actions necessarily tend to produce happiness, and what kinds to produce unhappiness.”

He has shown, by a lengthened argument, in which

<sup>1</sup> *Ethics of Naturalism*, by W. R. Sorley. Messrs. Blackwood & Sons, Edinburgh.



we have been able to find no flaw, that pleasure may

“arise from any, or almost any, course of conduct which the conditions of existence admit of. The evolutionist, therefore, can have no surer idea of greatest pleasure—even although this may not be a very sure one—than that it will follow in the train of the greatest or most varied activity which harmonizes with the laws of life.”<sup>1</sup>

Biological  
deduction  
of laws of  
conduct  
void  
through un-  
certainty.

It is obvious, therefore, that Mr. Spencer's proposed deduction of rules of conduct from the laws of life and the conditions of existence, even were it possible, is void through uncertainty. It would be as reasonable to deduce the theory of chemical equivalents from the laws of pure being. What is needed is special inquiry into, and a recognition of, the peculiar phenomena of the moral world, and Ethics has to account for and explain the phenomena of that world, and not to substitute for it another set of phenomena altogether.

Moral  
phenomena  
ignored or  
misinter-  
preted.

Our contention is, that Mr. Spencer has ignored in some instances the phenomena of the moral world, and has misinterpreted them in others, and generally has failed to recognise the peculiarity of the question. He has sought to apply for the explanation of moral phenomena a hypothesis framed for the explanation of physical or biological phenomena, and it is no wonder that he has failed in consequence. He is aware of the difference between the two, and now and then brings us to

<sup>1</sup> *Ethics of Naturalism*, pp. 201-2.

the chasm which intervenes between the one and the other. Here is one of the many descriptions he gives of the "struggle for existence":—

"The multitudinous creatures of all kinds which fill the earth, cannot live apart from one another—are interfered with by one another. In large measure the adjustments of laws to ends which we have been considering, are components of that 'struggle for existence,' carried on, too, between members of the same species, and between members of a different species; and, very generally, a successful adjustment made by one creature involves an unsuccessful adjustment made by another creature, either of the same kind, or of a different kind. That the carnivore may live, herbivore animals must die; and that its young may be reared, the young of weaker creatures must be orphaned. Maintenance of the hawk and its brood involves the deaths of many small birds; and that small birds may multiply their progeny must be fed with innumerable sacrificed worms and larvæ. Competition among members of the same species has allied, though less conspicuous, results. The stronger often carries off by force the prey which the weaker has caught. Monopolising certain hunting grounds, the more ferocious drive others of their kind into less favourable places. With plant-eating animals, too, the like holds; the better food is secured by the more vigorous animals, while the less vigorous and worse fed succumb either directly from innutrition or indirectly from resulting inability to escape enemies. That is to say, among creatures whose lives are carried on antagonistically, each of the two kinds of conduct must remain imperfectly evolved. Even in such few kinds of them as have little to fear from enemies or competitors, as lions or tigers, there is still inevitable failure in the adjustments of acts to ends towards the close of life. Death by starvation from inability to catch prey, shows a falling short of conduct from its ideal. This imperfectly-evolved conduct introduces us by association to conduct that is perfectly evolved."<sup>1</sup>

The  
struggle for  
existence.

Selfishness  
the univer-  
sal law.

"The spider kills the fly. The wiser sphinx  
Stings the poor spider in the centre nerve

<sup>1</sup> *Data of Ethics*, 17, 18.

Victory  
to the  
strong.

Which paralyses only ; lays her eggs,  
And buries with them with a loving care  
The spider, powerless but still alive,  
To warm them unto life, and afterward  
To serve as food among the little ones.  
This is the lesson Nature has to teach,  
'Woe to the conquered, victory to the strong.'  
And so, through all the ages, step by step  
The stronger and the craftiest replaced  
The weaker, and increased and multiplied.  
And in the end the outcome of the strife  
Was man, who had dominion over all,  
And preyed on all things, and the stronger man  
Trampled his weaker brother under foot."<sup>1</sup>

Survival of  
the fittest.

It is not necessary to add anything to the descriptions of the law of life given in the foregoing extract. *Vae victis* is the law of life in the organic world, and biological work since Darwin wrote the *Origin of Species*, has been in the direction of setting forth additional illustrations and proof of the law "the survival of the fittest." Assuming for the sake of argument that this law is proven, the problem set to the theory of evolution is to deduce morality, as we know it in human life, from these biological conditions. It is a formidable task. Mr. Spencer is aware of the difficulty, and in the foregoing extract says—

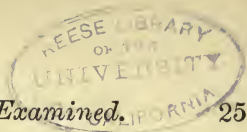
Can  
morality be  
deduced  
from the  
struggle for  
existence?

"This imperfectly evolved conduct introduces us by association to conduct that is perfectly evolved."

His self-appointed task, as described by himself is :

"to deduce from the laws of life and the conditions of existence what kinds of action necessarily tend to produce happiness, and what kinds tend to produce unhappiness."

<sup>1</sup> *A Modern Ideal*, by S. R. Lysaught, p. 53.



And when the time comes for this logical deduction, we must be content with "association." The transition from the conduct of animals to the conduct of man can only be made by association. Now association is of various kinds, and one kind is "contrast" or "antithesis," which is the kind used by Mr. Spencer. He speaks very severely of those moralists who do not recognise causation in the full sense of the word, and do not use it in the construction of their ethical system.

Transition to morality not by deduction, but by "association."

"So long as only *some* relation between cause and effect in conduct is recognised, and not *the* relation, a completely scientific form of knowledge has not been reached."

We venture to ask what treatment would Mr. Spencer give to a moralist who, having promised his readers to recognise causation in the full sense of the word, and rigorously use it in the deduction of rules of conduct from laws of life and conditions of existence, when the most serious step in the deduction came to be taken, introduced his readers to the new field only by "association"? Surely we have reason to say to Mr. Spencer "*de te fabula narratur.*"

Failure of Mr. Spencer to deduce morality from laws of life.

Nor does he mend the matter when he asks, referring to the same difficulty—

"Is it replied that the more intense pains and pleasures which have immediate reference to bodily needs, guide us rightly; while the weaker pains and pleasures, not immediately connected with the maintenance of life, guide us wrongly? Then the implication is that the system of guidance by

Mr. Spencer's challenge.

pleasures and pains, which has answered with all creatures below the human, fails with the human. Or rather, the admission being that, with mankind, it succeeds so far as fulfilment of certain imperative wants goes, it fails in respect of wants which are not imperative. Those who think this are required, in the first place, to show how the line is to be drawn between the two; and then to show us why the system which succeeds in the lower will fail in the higher."<sup>1</sup>

Answer  
thereto,  
1. Science  
has to  
recognise  
the special  
character  
of each  
department.

The answer to this is twofold. In the first place, we say that whenever science passes from a simpler to a more complex subject, it has to recognise new conditions of work, and to accept new principles of explanation. Mr. Spencer has had to submit himself to this inevitable necessity, though he has striven with all his might to avoid it, and has sought to disguise the nature of his procedure. He does not deduce chemical factors from the laws of physics. He assumes them. If he has to confine himself to the definite chemical factors present in the primordial nebulae, he is brought to a stand at the beginning of life. He is compelled to alter his method at every stage of the process, and to recognise new elements and new laws, and to assume new principles. Genesis, heredity, reproduction, are not explained but assumed. So also when he passes from what is below the human to the human, he is constrained to assume the characteristics of human nature, a faculty of moral intuition, and so on. It is consistent with the universal method of science that it recognises its

What is  
ample in  
lower  
regions will  
not serve  
in higher.

<sup>1</sup> pp. 84, 85.



limitations, and adapts itself to the peculiarities of each field of inquiry. A sufficient answer to Mr. Spencer's challenge is found when we say that the system of guidance which succeeds in the lower must fail in the higher, precisely because it is higher.

In the second place our answer is, that Mr. Spencer has himself undertaken the task he has imposed on others, and has succeeded in showing that the system of guidance by pleasures and pains has failed in the human sphere. He admits the failure, and, strange to say, the admission is on the very page in which he sets forth the challenge:—

2. Mr. Spencer has himself shown in various ways that guidance by pleasures and pains does fail with man.

“Guidance by proximate pleasures and pains fails throughout a wide range of cases.”

No doubt he goes on to explain the causes of failure, and to predict a time when the failure shall cease to be. We shall look at this prophecy a little further on. Meanwhile we lay stress on the admission. We place side by side two statements of Mr. Spencer. One is that—

Two statements of Mr. Spencer.

“the deductions of moral science are to be recognised as laws of conduct; and are to be conformed to irrespective of a direct estimation of happiness or misery.”

The second is—

“If the purpose of ethical inquiry is to establish rules of right living; and if the rules of right living are those of which the total results, individual and general, direct and indirect, are more conducive to human happiness, then it is absurd to ignore the immediate results, and to recognize only the remote results.” (p. 95.)

If pain, or, as Mr. Spencer euphemistically puts it, "disagreeable modes of consciousness," accompany acts that are really beneficial,

"that objection does not tell against guidance of pleasures and pains, since it merely implies that special and proximate pleasures and pains must be disregarded out of consideration for more remote and diffused pleasures and pains."

At one time we are told that proximate pleasures and pains must be disregarded, and at another time we are told that it is absurd to disregard them. How are we to reconcile the two? We leave them in their naked simplicity, with the remark that the contradiction is a proof that guidance by pleasures and pains fails with the human being, though it may have succeeded in lower spheres of life.

Happiness  
is no end  
for either  
public or  
private  
action.

Mr. Spencer's answer to himself is not yet complete. He has granted in express terms that guidance by pleasures and pains fails with man; in addition, he has demonstrated, in his criticism of Bentham and Mill, that

✓ "not general happiness becomes the ethical standard by which legislative action is to be guided, but universal justice" (p. 224.)

And also that in relation to private action

"the principle is true only in so far as it embodies a disguised justice."

His chapter on "Trial and Compromise" is one of the most powerful in the book, and in it he has clearly shown the inadequacy of guidance by pleasures and pains. Happiness cannot be taken as an end either for public action or for private action.

In his statement of the problem of ethics he has, however, said that the

“ultimate moral aim is a desirable state of feeling called by whatever name—gratification, enjoyment, happiness, pleasure somewhere, at some time, to some being or beings, is an in-expungable element of the conception. It is as much a necessary form of moral intuition as space is a necessary form of intellectual intuitions.”

A necessary form of intuition, which is at times unnecessary, is surely a curious conception. For, according to the statement, happiness gives place to justice as a guide to action, on the ground that it is a more intelligible end, and also because happiness as an end is indefinite. This is another illustration of the failure of guidance by pleasures and pains, whether proximate or remote. If justice has become the guide to action, then we may perhaps be inclined to ask, Is the conception of justice so perfectly plain and intelligible as Mr. Spencer supposes it to be? Nor can the answer be easily given. We recall to mind the opening chapter of Plato's *Republic*, and the discussion in it on the nature of justice; and the discussion by Mr. Sidgwick in the *Methods of Ethics*, and we are not sure if the substitution of justice for happiness can be readily accepted. We are sure, however, that in either case the result is subversive of Mr. Spencer's system; for it raises the question of the relation of justice to happiness,—a question which admits of no answer from the standpoint of evolution.

Attempt to substitute justice for happiness as end of conduct.

Illegitimate because the relation of justice to happiness has to be defined.

Further  
statement  
by Mr.  
Spencer of  
guidance by  
pleasures  
and pains.

We feel constrained to quote a passage in which the failure of Mr. Spencer's argument is recognised in express terms by Mr. Spencer himself:—

“Were pleasures all of one kind, differing only in degree; were pains all of one kind, differing only in degree; and could pleasures be measured against pains with definite results, the problems of conduct would be greatly simplified. Were the pleasures serving as incentives and deterrents, simultaneously present to consciousness with like vividness, or were they all immediately impending, or were they all equi-distant in time; the problems would be further simplified. And they would be still further simplified if the pleasures and pains were exclusively those of the actor. But both the desirable and the undesirable feelings are of various kinds, making quantitative comparisons difficult; some are present and some are future, increasing the difficulty of quantitative comparison; some are entailed on self and some on others, again increasing the difficulty. So that the guidance yielded by the primary principle reached is of little service unless supplemented by the guidance of secondary principles.”<sup>1</sup>

Could we have a more complete acknowledgment of the fact that guidance by pleasures and pains fails with the human being? How shall we obtain the secondary principles of guidance? and what is their validity? If they are derived from the primary principle, they share its uncertainty. If they are independent of it, then it fails; in either case the result is fatal to the theory of Mr. Spencer.

Mr.  
Spencer's  
prediction  
that guid-  
ance by  
pleasures  
and pains  
will  
succeed in  
the future.

Guidance by pleasures and pains having thus been shown to fail, Mr. Spencer finds a refuge in the prediction that eventually it will succeed. When life is complete, and the organism is fully adjusted to the environment, and the happy time is come

<sup>1</sup> *Data of Ethics*, pp. 150-1.

when every action of man demanded by social conditions shall give him pleasure, then the conflict will cease, the disparity will disappear. With great solemnity he says—

“Not he who believes that adaptation will increase is absurd, but he who doubts that it will increase is absurd.”

Well, we are in the unhappy condition of those whose belief is here characterised as absurd. Taking into account only those forces which, according to Mr. Spencer, have guided the evolution of life, we see no escape from pessimism. If we look forward across the years, we come to a physical condition of things which must necessarily, according to the teaching of science, produce a change in human life. The process from the first germ of life to the highest possible life has been long, and the conflict has been great. Then must come a time when this process will reach its culminating point, and the history of life must then be a period of decline and fall, until when the sun has grown cold, and the earth has grown unfit for life, the end is desolation and annihilation.

We need not, however, go so far into the future to free ourselves from the nightmare of Mr. Spencer's prophecy. All that is needful for this purpose is to point out that his assumption is untrue. The assumption is that evolved conduct is moral conduct. Evolved conduct may be good or may be evil. Evil does not become good by be-

✓  
The prediction must fail for lack of time.

It must also fail from the fact that evolved conduct is not necessarily moral conduct.



coming definite and coherent, nor does good lose its character by becoming indefinite and incoherent. The appliances of civilization may be used for evil, and an evil man may place himself in most definite relations to the resources of civilization. Nihilists and dynamiters have been most definite in their use of explosives, most definite in the aim they have in view, and their conduct is quite coherent. They use the telegraph and the railway, the dynamite is a most definite chemical substance, and the clockwork is accurately timed, so as to release a trigger at a definite moment to cause a definite explosion, to accomplish a particular end.

Evil may  
consist with  
the law of  
evolution.

The tests of definiteness, coherence, and heterogeneity afford no criterion of moral conduct. The formula of evolution may be as readily ascribed to the development of evil conduct as of good. Evil may be traced from an indefinite, incoherent homogeneity to a definite, coherent heterogeneity, and all the marks of evolution may be applied to it. We may trace crime from rudimentary beginnings, to the most complex conspiracy ever formed, and the history of the process would be in exact correspondence with the requirements of evolved conduct, as described by Mr. Spencer. Nor is the matter mended by the proposed substitution of Industrialism for the military and feudal spirit which formerly dominated the lives of men. Industrialism has been formulated in political economy, and political

economy is non-moral,—at all events before the recent revolt against its non-moral character, against which Mr. Spencer so strenuously protests, political economy made self-interest its ruling power. It is well known that the Darwinian law of the struggle for existence is simply an extension of Malthusianism, and the doctrine of political economy, in some forms of it, is simply self-interest reduced to system. How are we to evolve a new morality out of selfishness? or recognise in Industrialism the new evolving force, which is to teach us to love our enemies, to do good to them that hate us, when Industrialism is based on self-interest, and teaches us to buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market? We are aware of the hopes which were burning brightly in the human heart some forty years ago. We have read the speeches of Cobden, the pages of Buckle, and the universal song raised to the praise and glory of Industrialism at the time of the Exhibition of 1851. Since then many things have happened. But Mr. Spencer seems never to have outgrown the impression then made on him, nor to have recognised that the industrial tendency has need of a moral motive, which it cannot of itself supply. The transactions of the Stock Exchange, the phenomena of Strikes, the various forms of Socialism, and other things of the same order, show that Industrialism has no charm of its own, whereby it may produce good and

The law of the struggle for existence is an extension of Malthusianism.

Industrialism.

The industrial tendency needs a moral motive.

remove evil. It may give increased facilities for good; it may also afford a new soil for the production of evil. At all events, it affords no criterion of what is moral.

Moral  
obligation  
must be  
accounted  
for.

Any attempt to account for morality must have regard to the essential feature of it. We are conscious of an obligation on our part to submit ourselves to the law which we conceive as binding upon us, and the problem set to Evolution is to show how the binding force of the rules of experience could have arisen, and how the deductions of the ethics of evolution can have authority. Let us test the attempt by a special instance. We take veracity as our example, and we propose to examine whether it is possible to account for the universal obligation to truthfulness on the evolutionary hypothesis. If morality can be deduced from the laws of life and the conditions of existence, we have a right to expect that the biological conditions which have caused success in the lower sphere, should also have scope in the higher. We find, however, that with all creatures up to man, a premium is put on deception. It is the weapon which the weak use against the strong, the only effective means which they have. Any work on natural history will afford illustration of the truth of the statement that deception is universal, and has the moral stamp of success, that is, according to Utilitarianism, upon it. The flatfish which

Proposed  
deduction of  
morality  
from laws  
of life and  
conditions of  
existence  
tested in the  
particular  
instance of  
veracity.

escapes the jaws of the dogfish is the one which can imitate most closely the colour of the sandbank on which it lies. The deception, being found to bring its advantage with it, has become an organised utility, and has been transmitted to its descendants. We need not multiply instances which will readily occur to every one. Imitation, mimicry, deception, prevail everywhere in the animal kingdom, from the least to the highest, from the insect to the mother bird, which moves as if her wings were broken, to entice the pursuer from her nest.

Deception  
prevalent  
in all the  
lower  
spheres of  
life.

This process of deception has the sanction of success. It has been advantageous. Those who have been best at it, have escaped the danger before which their less skilful relatives went down, and organised deception becomes the fit rule of conduct for all who have survived. It is curious to think that out of this biological law of life there should have been evolved the supreme authority of truthfulness, and its full obligation by man.

Deception  
stamped  
with  
success

It becomes more curious when we pass to the world of human life. It cannot be shown on the hypothesis of evolution that the habit of truthfulness is beneficial, pleasurable, or advantageous. The utilitarian sanction for truthfulness is neither powerful nor universal. Few laws enforce it, nor is the social reprobation attaching to untruthfulness very severe. There are circumstances which to many seem to justify lying. "All is fair in love

Truthful-  
ness cannot  
be shown  
to be  
advan-  
tageous

and war." To deceive an enemy has been held to be blameless, even laudable. We take the following passage from Ruskin—

The view of  
Mr. Ruskin.

"Truth, that only virtue of which there are no degrees, but breaks and rents continually; that pillar of the earth but a cloudy pillar; that golden and narrow line, which the very powers and virtues which lean upon it bend, which policy and prudence conceal, which kindness and courtesy modify, which courage overshadows with his shield, imagination covers with her wings, and charity dims with her tears. How difficult must the maintenance of that authority be, which, while it has to restrain the hostility of all the worst principles of man, has also to restrain the disorders of his best,—which is continually assaulted by the one and betrayed by the other, and which regards with the same severity the lightest and the boldest violations of its law! There are some faults slight in the sight of love; some errors slight in the estimate of wisdom; but truth forgives no insult, and endures no stain.

"We do not enough consider this; nor enough dread the slight and continual occasions of offence against her. We are too much in the habit of looking at falsehood in its darkest associations, and through the colour of its worst purposes. That indignation we profess to feel at deceit absolute, is indeed only at deceit malicious. We resent calumny, hypocrisy, and treachery, because they harm us, not because they are untrue. Take the detraction and the mischief from the untruth, and we are little offended by it; turn it into praise and we may be pleased with it, and yet it is not the calumny nor treachery that does the largest sum of mischief in the world; they are continually crushed, and are felt only in being crushed. But it is the glistening and softly-spoken lie; the amiable fallacy; the patriotic lie of the historian, the provident lie of the politician, the zealous lie of the partizan, the merciful lie of the friend, and the careless lie of each man to himself, that casts the black shadow over humanity, through which we thank any man who pierces, as we thank those who dig a well in the desert. Happy that the thirst for truth still remains with us, even when we have wilfully left the fountains of it."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, chap. ii., sect. i.



We are prepared to stake the whole question of the evolution of morality in this one point. How can the felt obligation to be truthful be shown to be an organized and transmitted utility, when the advantage of veracity cannot be shown. On the contrary, if we limit our view to the present life, the practice of veracity can be proven to be disadvantageous. The practice of this virtue has many difficulties to contend with. There are many instances in which it has brought death to the witness for truth, and ruin to his friends. Many moralists and theologians have held a lie to be justifiable to elude an enemy or prevent a crime. May we tell a lie in the service of duty? Basil says No, and Chrysostom says Yes. Augustine is of opinion that if the whole human race could be saved by one lie, one must rather let it perish. And Jacobi affirms—

If the opposite of truthfulness prevails in biology, and the advantage of veracity in human life cannot be shown, then the obligation of truthfulness cannot be deduced from experience.

“I will lie like Desdemona, I will lie and deceive like Pylades who took the place of Orestes.”

We quote these for the sake of showing that the utility of truthfulness is by no means obvious; and there can be no such experience of the pleasure, advantage, or benefit of veracity as to account for the fact that men value truth for its own sake, and feel constrained to practice it, regardless of consequences.

So strongly is this felt by Utilitarians of all shades, that they have given up the attempt to

Utilitarian  
mode of  
evading the  
difficulty.

derive veracity from an experience of its utility, or to find its sanction in utility. Their way is to deny the binding obligation of truthfulness. They are inclined to hold that the law of truth is neither universal nor supreme. Whether we are or are not to be truthful depends on time, and place, and circumstances. If veracity is an absolute and independent duty, and not a special application of some higher principle or principles, then it is conceded by all that experiences of utility can neither account for it, nor explain the sanction of it. This has been so well put by Mr. Russell Wallace that we quote the passage:—

Testimony  
of Mr.  
Russell  
Wallace.

“A number of prisoners, taken during the Santal insurrection, were allowed to go free on parole to work at a certain spot for wages. After some time cholera attacked them, and they were obliged to leave, but every one of them returned and gave up his earnings to the guard. Two hundred savages with money in their girdles, walked thirty miles back to prison rather than break their word. My own experience with savages has furnished me with similar, although less severely tested, instances; and we cannot avoid asking, how is it, that in these few cases ‘experiences of utility’ have left such an overpowering impression, while in so many others they have left none? The experiences of savage men, as regards the utility of truth, must, in the long run, be pretty nearly equal. How is it, that, in some cases, the result is a sanctity which overrides all considerations of personal advantage, while in others there is hardly a rudiment of such a feeling?

“The intuitionist theory, which I am now advocating, explains this by the supposition that there is a feeling—a sense of right and wrong—in our nature, antecedent to, and independent of experiences of utility. When free-play is allowed to the relations between man and man, this feeling attaches itself to those acts of universal utility or self-sacrifice which are the

products of our affections and sympathies, and which we term moral; while it may be, and often is, perverted, to give the same sanction to acts of narrow and conventional utility, which are really immoral—as when the Hindoo will tell a lie, but will sooner starve than eat unclean food; and looks upon the marriage of adult females as gross immorality.

“It is difficult to conceive that such an intense and mystical feeling of right and wrong (so intense as to overcome all ideas of personal advantage or utility), could have developed out of accumulated ancestral experiences of utility; and still more difficult to understand, how feelings developed by one set of utilities, could be transferred to acts of which the utility was partial, imaginary, or altogether absent. But if a moral sense is an essential part of our nature, it is easy to see that its sanction may often be given to acts which are useless or immoral; just as the natural appetite for drink is perverted by the drunkard into the means of his destruction.”<sup>1</sup>

As far as regards the obligation to truthfulness, we can find no basis for it in biological conditions. Biology gives its sanction to concealment and deception. Nor is it more hopeful to seek a sanction for it in the experience of man, that truth is advantageous. But yet the fact stands before us, plain and palpable, that the truth has claims on us which we feel bound to acknowledge. We ought to be truthful. Whence this oughtness? and this recognition of universal obligation? The universality and supremacy of moral law cannot be explained. All that Mr. Spencer will recognize is the obligation to use the means if we are to get to the end; a substitute which can never be mistaken for the original feeling of “oughtness.”

No basis  
for veracity  
in biological  
conditions.

The surprising thing, however, is that Mr.

<sup>1</sup> On *Natural Selection*, pp. 353-5.

Ethics can,  
on the  
theory of  
evolution,  
be only that  
branch of  
science  
which deals  
with the  
natural  
history of  
conduct.

Spencer can speak of "Ethics" at all. No ethics are inconceivable in which *will* does not stand for something. But according to the teaching of Mr. Spencer, will is an illusion. With him there is no self, there are only states of consciousness, which are again the result of molecular and chemical changes in the physical organism. The physical changes always produce the corresponding phenomena of memory, volition, feeling. Thought is as mechanical as digestion; conduct is as purposeless as gravitation; and the feeling of obligation is a useless and unnecessary accompaniment of the molecular changes of the organism. Can we command conduct categorically irrespective of and without regard to consequences? Can we say to men, Thou shalt not, thou shalt, or must we say it is worth your while to do this and avoid that? But if conduct depends entirely on the physical constitution and environment of a man, why should anything be said to him one way or the other? We here touch again on the failure of evolutionary ethics, which cannot account for the idea of obligation. If, however, the doctrine of Evolution could be successfully applied to ethics, the science of ethics would cease to deal with what ought to be, and confine itself strictly to what is. Ethics would become the branch of science which deals with the natural history of conduct.

This is really what ethics have become in the

hands of Mr. Spencer. Mr. Spencer does not care about a feeling or idea of moral obligation. Believing as he does that freedom is an illusion, what has he to do with the necessity of self-control in action? In ordinary belief, a man controls himself because he is free, is responsible because free, feels above all the shame of penitence and the agonies of remorse, because he knows he could have acted differently if he had exerted his free volition. But with Mr. Spencer, a man is at the most a conscious and social animal; a thing made up of atoms and molecules. What duty has he to recognise, except the promptings of nature? What is right but the duty of attaining to the fitness which will survive? As to the feeling of obligation it is simply the expression of a consciousness of mal-adaptation to the environment. So Mr. Spencer says in express terms :—

Mr.  
Spencer's  
affirmation  
that the  
sense of  
obligation  
is transitory.

“This remark implies the tacit conclusion, which will be to most very startling, that the sense of duty or moral obligation is transitory, and will diminish as fast as moralization increases. Startling though it is, this conclusion can be satisfactorily defended. Evidently, with complete adaptation to the social state, that element in the moral consciousness which is expressed by the word obligation will disappear. The higher action required for the harmonious carrying on of life will be as much matters of course as those lower actions which the simpler desires prompt. In their proper times and places and proportions, the moral sentiments will guide men just as spontaneously and adequately as do the sensations.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Data of Ethics*, p. 127-8,



Views of  
Bentham  
and Mill.

How much wiser than Bentham and Mill is Mr. Spencer! Bentham thought he could do without the word "ought," carried on a fierce polemic against it, and the fact which it expressed, and the consequence was that his system made shipwreck on it. Mr. Spencer knows that "ought" represents a fact of moral consciousness. He is unwilling to lose the advantage of using it. It is living and active, here and now. But he may get rid of it quite as effectually by a prophecy. And until the time of the fulfilment of prophecy he may use the word and the fact for the strengthening of his system. Stuart Mill, in his innocence, thought he could account for intuitions by the experience of the individual. Mr. Spencer cannot get on without intuitions; he will use them when necessary, but by and by he hopes he can do without them.

This amazing fertility of resource cannot, however, be granted to him. We readily grant to him that if obligation has no other meaning than that which he formally ascribes to it, then it will disappear. To him

Mr.  
Spencer's  
inadequate  
conception  
of conscious-  
ness.

"the essential trait in the moral consciousness is the control of some feeling or feelings, by some other feeling or feelings." (p. 113).

The phenomena of moral consciousness are thus a conflict of feelings, out of which conflict emerges a resultant which, being the stronger, takes the lead,

and incites to action. The statement is at once inadequate and misleading,—one feeling does not control another. When we come to the region where control can be rightly spoken of, we have passed beyond feeling; we are in the region of comparison, of judgment. Feelings and desires are known to us and felt by us, but they do not act in the pure and simple manner described by Mr. Spencer. They are elements in the comparison of motives, and are taken up by the moral judgment in order to the determination of conduct.

His  
statement  
misleading  
as well as  
inadequate.

Here we have again come across that fatal defect in the system of Mr. Spencer, which vitiates all his reasoning. We mean his habit of viewing feelings as if they were something apart, and could take their own course as if they were so many detached substances. His habitual disregard of the self-conscious subject is surprising; more specially when we also consider how with the same breath he uses language which is meaningless, unless the activity of the subject is presupposed. At one moment he speaks of the control of one feeling by another, and the next moment speaks of the

His  
marked in-  
consistency

“conscious relinquishment of immediate and special good, to gain distant and general good” as “a cardinal trait of the self-restraint called moral” (p. 114).

Is this conscious relinquishment a feeling? we trow not. The moral consciousness is something

What is  
involved in  
moral con-  
sciousness.

more than feelings in unison or in conflict. At the very least it involves the power of looking before and after, the power of making comparison, and of determination of conduct in relation to a foreseen course of action.

This way of representing the moral consciousness has, however, enabled Mr. Spencer to speak of obligation as a vanishing quantity. He has a vision of the time when the control of one feeling by another will be perfect, and the pain of conflict will have ceased, and a man will do

“the right thing with a simple feeling of satisfaction in doing it; and will be, indeed, impatient if anything prevents him from having the satisfaction of doing it.”

He will cease to have any thought of *must*, he will have no coercive feeling of *ought*; the sense of obligation will have retreated into the background of the mind. We shall not inquire too curiously into the meaning of the antithesis between the “right” thing and the simple feeling of satisfaction in doing it. It would be too cruel to translate the word “right” into its Spencerian equivalent, and read the sentence thus:

“He does the ‘pleasurable’ thing with a simple feeling of satisfaction in doing it.”

It would make the sentence meaningless, but that is the usual fate which inevitably waits on all schemes of Hedonistic ethics. But the point we insist on is this, that the sense of obligation never

The word  
“right”  
translated  
into its  
Spencerian  
equivalent.

vanishes, even when the doing of duty becomes easy and habitual. There are various reasons why this sense of obligation should continue. One reason is that the ideal of human conduct is continually growing, and seeks a higher statement and embodiment of itself, as knowledge widens. Another reason is that the demands of moral law are always such as to transcend the utmost range of human fulfilment; and Mr. Spencer's dream is possible even as a dream, only because he has lowered both the ideal of human conduct and the requirements of moral law. Still further: the conception of moral obligation set forth by Mr. Spencer is radically defective. The idea of authoritativeness, which is one element in the abstract consciousness of duty, has arisen from the fact

Obligation permanent,

1. Because the human ideal is continually growing, and, 2. Because of the infinite nature of moral law and its requirements.

Mr. Spencer's view radically defective.

"that accumulated experiences have produced the consciousness that guidance by feelings which refer to remote and general results, is usually more conducive to welfare than guidance by feelings to be immediately gratified."

But why this should generate the authority implied in the sense of obligation is not apparent. To have regard to remote and general results does not imply morality. One may restrain himself from gratifying immediate feelings in order to gratify them more effectively in the future. Nay, he may sacrifice them for the moment, and yet all the time in the present and in the future may transgress



every rule of morality. A burglar may scorn delights, and live laborious days, may spend money in buying the implements of his craft, in order that at a fit time he may safely rob a bank or a house. In so doing would he manifest "a cardinal trait of the restraint called moral"?

Moral  
coerciveness  
not to be  
derived  
from fear  
of punish-  
ment.

The element of coerciveness is derived by Mr. Spencer from the fear of punishment, and these two elements of authoritativeness and coerciveness are the main elements, according to Mr. Spencer, in the consciousness of duty. The fear of punishment is the permanent motive of the savage. If we ask how this becomes the felt coercive element of duty, we are led by Mr. Spencer to undertake a long journey. At the outset we ask, Why does the savage refrain from scalping his enemy? and the answer is, Because he is afraid of the anger of the chief. This restraint arising from the "extrinsic" effects of an action, is not yet moral. The moral restraint arises when we refrain from slaying an enemy because of the intrinsic effects of the action. These intrinsic effects are of the following kind:—

"the infliction of death-agony on the victim, the destruction of all his possibilities of happiness, the entailed sufferings to his belongings."

The ground of restraint in the case of the savage is the fear of future pain to himself: with the evolutionist it is concern for the pleasures and pains of others. How is the transition made?



Mr. Spencer's account of the transition can explain only those deterrents which he neglects as non-moral. The restraint which makes a man prudent from fear of the gallows, has no mode of transforming itself into the disinterested restraint which guides its actions by regard to the well-being of other people.

Along this line we shall never reach the grand conception of duty or of virtue, as we find it embodied in human life, and expressed in human literature. A writer who can resolve the authoritativeness of duty into a calculation of future pleasure, and its coerciveness into a dread of consequences, has left out of sight a large sphere of human sentiment, and the greater part of morality. He who can look at the sense of obligation as something that must fade away, has not yet seen that the distinguishing element of duty is not restraint but constraint. Its main purpose is to prescribe what kind of life we ought to live, what work to do, what end to accomplish; not merely to say Thou shalt not, but Thou shalt. Even if we were to reach the time and state when it would be no longer necessary to say Thou shalt not, the sense of obligation would remain, and would make itself felt so long as there was a further progress to be made, a higher ideal to reach, and a further end to be accomplished. Neither by the attempt to resolve it into its elements, nor by the prediction

Duty not  
restraint  
but  
constraint.

that it will fade away, has Mr. Spencer succeeded in getting rid of the sense of moral obligation.

Limited use  
of law of  
causality in  
ethics.

We shall look for a little at Mr. Spencer's attempt to find a basis for ethics, and at his exposition of the use of the principle of "causality" in ethics. All systems of ethics, save his own, are, he finds, distinguished by the absence of the use of the principle of causation, or by an inadequate use of it. We suppose that ethical writers would admit the charge and justify it. They believe that to treat the human world as no more than a chain of efficient causality, is at the outset to make ethics impossible. Ethics is possible, if we can rise to a point of view which goes beyond mere sequence, and can reasonably hope to reach a teleological interpretation of the facts of human life. A kingdom of means and ends is something altogether different from a kingdom of causes and effects, and the attempt to make conscious life subject to mere physical causation must necessarily fail.

Mr.  
Spencer's  
attempt to  
find a basis  
for morality  
in the  
physical  
order.

Following out his attempt to apply causation to moral life, he seeks to find a basis for morals in the physical order. So far as the four chapters which set forth the physical view, the biological view, the psychological view, and the sociological view are concerned, we have to say of them that what is true in them is common-place, and what is new in them is not true. The truth in them is

the common-place that man has a body, that he is a living creature, that he has an emotional and rational nature, and that he is a social being; but the attempt to find a basis for morality in these respective orders of being must be frankly set down as failure. Our waning space warns us to be brief, and we shall compress what we have still to say. The main stress of his argument is laid on the fact that

His attempt  
a failure.

“the connexion between acts and effects is independent of any alleged theological or political authority.”

Quite so in many cases, but not so in others. His illustrations are, if we tie the main artery we stop most of the blood going to a limb, if we bleed a man, if a man has cancer of the œsophagus, if we forcibly prevent a man from eating, if we pay him for his work in bad coin, in all these cases, and in others mentioned by Mr. Spencer, the man is disabled, and

Confusion  
of non-  
moral and  
moral  
agents.

“the mischief results, apart from any divine command or political enactment, or moral intuition.”

Again we say quite so. But when we come to the passing of moral judgment on any of these physical processes and results, we must discriminate, and must recognise an element not contained in the physical order. The tying of an artery has always the result of causing disablement to a limb. But why was the artery tied? If it is done for a beneficent end, then the act is not condemned,

The physical result caused by a cancer may be in no wise different from the result caused by a robber, who deprives a man of food. But we must go beyond the physical order in order to find a ground for the reprobation we pass on the conduct of the robber. Physical causation cannot account for the facts of the moral consciousness, nor does duty, responsibility, and remorse find a fitting place in the physical order. We must have regard to the motives and the intentions of the agent before we approve or condemn his action.

Grounds of moral judgment not to be found in the chain of physical causes and effects.

The mistake made by Mr. Spencer consists in not seeing that the ground of moral judgment lies elsewhere than in the causal connection of the events to which it refers. The life of a man is destroyed by a bullet, and the momentum of a bullet was caused by the explosive power of gunpowder, confined within the narrow space of a gun barrel. The gunpowder is of such a nature as to explode when a percussion cap is struck, and we may trace the links of causation further back to the nature of the atoms, and their chemical combination, and to the nature of guns, and so on. But to trace the links of causation in the physical order does not enable us to recognise something which entered into the midst of them, and was the real factor in the case. The touch of the murderous finger on the trigger is the cause of the murder, and then we are lifted up to the recogni-

tion of causes of another kind. We are in the region of motive and intention, among facts of a moral order, which demand another kind of treatment.

Facts of a moral order demand different treatments.

We have already dealt with the contribution which, in the hands of Mr. Spencer, Biology makes to Ethics. All we shall now say is this, that the command of biology is based on the assumptions that guidance by present pleasures and pains has succeeded. We are told that—

“the vital functions accept no apologies on the ground that neglect of them was unavoidable, or that the reason for neglect was noble. The direct and indirect sufferings caused by non-conforming to the laws of life are the same whatever induces the non-conformity.”

So we must have regard to the immediate results. But the whole question turns, not on the sufferings, but on the purpose and aim which induced the non-conformity. The laws of life as furnished by biology may come into conflict with the laws of the higher life of man, and when they do so, it becomes the duty of a man to incur the sufferings caused by a disregard to the laws of biological life. The point, however, on which we now insist is, that the command of biology is to be guided by immediate results, and the teaching of psychology, as interpreted by Mr. Spencer is

Discordant voices of biology and psychology.

“the subjection of immediate sensations to the idea of sensations to come.”



and the recognition that feelings

“have authorities proportioned to the degrees in which they are removed by their complexity and their ideality from simple sensations and appetites.”

Are we to  
be biological  
or psycho-  
logical in  
our Ethics?

Are we, then, to be biological in our ethics or psychological? Under which king shall we serve? Are we to accept the teaching of biology, and seek those things which are immediately present, and think it to be absurd to recognise only the remote results of conduct? or are we to disregard biology, and insist on the superior wisdom of psychology? If we do so, what becomes of our proposed deduction of morality from the laws of life and conditions of existence, and what are we to do in the meantime, while the need presses on us, to obtain a scientific guide to conduct? Shall we wait until biology and psychology have been reconciled to one another, and are agreed to speak with one voice, and recommend one principle of conduct? The vacuum must be filled, but the sciences Mr. Spencer calls in to help to fill it have disagreed, and their dispute is likely to issue in the widening of the vacuum. Meanwhile we shall content ourselves for a little longer with the old Ethics and their sanctions.

The socio-  
logical  
view.

There remains the sociological view, which perhaps may help to reconcile the discordant utterances of biology and psychology.

“From the sociological point of view, ethics become nothing else than a definite account of the forms of conduct that are

fitted to the associated state, in such wise that the lives of each and all may be the greatest possible, alike in length and breadth " (p. 133).

It is to be remembered, however, that on the same principle—

"there is a supposable formula for the activities of each species, which, could it be drawn out, would constitute a system of morality for that species."

If we follow the ascending scale, we have a series of systems of morality, corresponding to the position a species occupies in the ladder of evolution. If we follow man from his pre-social stage to man in his social stage, we have at the new position to include an added factor in the formula. This addition affords a contrast to all systems of morality supposed to be applicable to lower species. It might have been supposed that we should find a striking likeness between all systems of morality. But we find, instead, a decided contrast. Man is the only species which has "a formula for complete life." It is very strange that this should be the case, seeing that the formula is only the outcome of adaptation to the environment, physical, biological, social. For other animals are also social; at all events

Ascending  
scale of  
systems of  
morals.

Man alone  
has "a  
formula  
for complete  
life."

"there are inferior species which display considerable degrees of sociality."

Why, then, should the morality applicable to them be so different from the morality of man? Is not

Inadequacy and failure of the sociological view.

the additional factor of such a kind as to necessitate a view of morality altogether new? In which case, we ask again, what has become of the proposed attempt to deduce morality from the laws of life and conditions of existence?

The ultimate end, even on the sociological view, is the individual happiness. In order, however, the more effectively to attain that end,

“the life of the social organism, must, as an end, rank above the lives of its unity.”

Personal pleasure still the ultimate end: impossible to deduce morality from this.

We cheerfully admit that the welfare of society as a whole ought to be put in the foreground, but we see no reason for the admission on the ground set forth by Mr. Spencer. If my duties to the social organism have, as their ultimate ground, the aim to secure for myself the greatest amount of pleasure and the least of pain, what means are there to constrain me to my duty when the two ends conflict?

“Living together arose because, on the average, it proved more advantageous to each than living apart.”

Let us suppose one to reason in the following fashion, what answer would Mr. Spencer find. I conceive it to my advantage to live apart. I find that others keep the sunshine from me, and my only request to my fellow-men is that made by Diogenes to Alexander. There is no answer to this position on any Utilitarian hypothesis. It is no answer to the difficulty to say that the good time is coming when

“the relations, at present familiar to us, will be inverted ; and, instead of each maintaining his own claims, others will maintain his claims for him.”

And this brings us again to Mr. Spencer's favourite method of escape from difficulty—a method which cannot be allowed to any moralist. We are moral now. We have a consciousness of right and wrong. We feel moral obligation, and it is a mere evasion of the question to say that there will come a time when we shall be so moral as to have no consciousness of right and wrong, and so have any feeling of moral obligation.

It is not to be denied that in these chapters on the physical, the biological, the psychological, and sociological views of morality there are many wise observations on nature, man, and society ; nor do we affirm that they are unprofitable reading. On the contrary, there is much in them which deserves the deepest consideration of all men. Our contention is that the observations made and the views promulgated are irrelevant to the thesis propounded by Mr. Spencer. He has set himself to explain morality, and to devise rules of conduct for man as he now is. He has substituted for morality something which is non-moral, and the rules of conduct are not for man as he is, but for an ideal man in a state of society which is non-existent. His *Data of Ethics* is another *Utopia*.

The irrelevant nature of the argument used by Mr Spencer.

This brings us to the last point we shall consider

Absolute  
and relative  
ethics.

at the present time. We mean the distinction drawn by Mr. Spencer between absolute and relative ethics. At the outset we may say that it is by no means clear how, on Mr. Spencer's view, such a distinction is possible, nor how absolute ethics may precede relative ethics, except on the supposition that the end is implied in the process. When Mr. Spencer says

"that ascertainment of the actual truths has been made possible only by pre-ascertainment of certain ideal truths" (p. 220),

he raises the question of how the human mind can know the ideal before the actual. On the hypothesis of evolution this is clearly impossible; for it pre-supposes that the evolution is simply the realisation of a prior idea involved at the beginning, to be evolved at the end of the series of changes. From our point of view we have no objection to such a conception, but it is fatal to the theory of Mr. Spencer.

Illustration  
from the  
progress of  
mechanics.

He seeks to make his meaning plain by the progress of mechanics, from its empirical to its rational form. We may accept his account of the genesis of abstract mechanics, and need not criticize it too curiously:—

"By easy and rude experiences there were inductively reached, vague but practically true notions respecting the over-balancing of bodies, the motions of missiles, the actions of levers."

This may be accepted as, so far, a true account of the matter. But the formulated, ideal mechanics



must be of a kind which will truly interpret the first rude experiences of the race, and not contradict them. They must be consistent with universal experience. In our ideal mechanics we may assume a lever which is absolutely rigid, a fulcrum without breadth, and the weight of the body to be moved to be collected at a certain point. Abstract mechanics does assume this, knowing all the while that as a matter of fact, we have no such levers or fulcrums in nature. Still the demonstrations are true as far as they go. But even abstract mechanics cannot dispense with space, and time, and body, and it assumes those intuitions which are universal and necessary to the human mind. It cannot move a step without them. The intuitions of space and number are drawn on at every step. The inference drawn by Mr. Spencer is, therefore, by no means plain that in a similar fashion—

Supposed  
analogy  
between  
mechanics  
and ethics.

“by easy and rude experiences there were inductively reached, vague but partially true notions respecting the effects of man’s behaviour on themselves, on one another, and on society’ (p. 220).

And the reason is because the cases are not parallel. By this we mean that in the hands of Mr. Spencer what corresponds in ethics to absolute mechanics is in contradiction to the moral intuitions of the human race. If he could set forth an abstract mechanics, the conclusions of which would show that the intuitions of space and time would disappear, he would accomplish what he has professed

The cases  
not parallel.

to demonstrate in ethics, when he predicts a time when the sense of obligation will disappear. Again we say, that we do not deny a distinction between absolute and relative ethics, we say that Mr. Spencer has no right to make the distinction. If he had been able to show how the sense of obligation and the power of discerning right from wrong were present and operative at every stage of the process, as the intuitions of space and time are present and operative at every stage in the evolution of abstract mechanics, he would have done something bearing on the proof of his thesis. Instead we have a categorical denial of the moral intuitions, and a prophecy of their disappearance.

Mr. Spencer confesses that there is no guidance in relative ethics.

In his zeal for absolute ethics he is quite prepared to assert that relative ethics can afford no guidance to man. He affirms that—

“throughout a considerable part of conduct, no guiding principle, no method of estimation, enables us to say whether a proposed course is even relatively right; as causing, proximately and remotely, specially and generally, the greatest surplus of good over evil” (p. 268).

Let the reader translate this into the language of mechanics, and see how the parallel between mechanics and ethics again fails. His illustrations of the uncertainty of knowing right from wrong, all turn on the difficulty of calculating contingencies. One case is that of a tenant farmer, whose political principles prompt him to vote in opposition to his landlord. The way in which Mr. Spencer

balances the pros and cons would be amusing, if it were not so sad—

“We have to recognise the fact that in countless such cases no one can decide by which of the alternative cases the least wrong is likely to be done” (p. 267).

Here is in truth, no moral guidance, and this is demonstrated by the only morality which can result from the balancings of pleasures and pains. Ordinary men, who believe in God and in moral law, would at once say that the tenant farmer ought to follow his principles, and leave the issues to God.

Nor does absolute ethics afford guidance to man. Before its rules can come into action there must come a time when right action may be done without leaving a trace of pain anywhere or to any person.

No guidance  
in absolute  
ethics.

“The philosophical moralist treats,” we are told by Mr. Spencer, “solely of the straight man. He determines the properties of the straight man, describes how the straight man comports himself; shows in what relationship he stands to other straight men; shows how a community of straight men is constituted. Any deviation from strict rectitude he is compelled wholly to ignore. It cannot be admitted into his premisses without vitiating all his conclusions. A problem in which a *crooked* man forms one of the elements is insoluble by him” (p. 271-2).

The philo-  
sophical  
moralist  
treats of  
the straight  
man.

But, according to the analogy to mechanics, we can only get the straight man by abstraction from the crooked man; and, still adhering to the analogy, every concrete mechanical problem can be solved approximately by the methods of mechanics. Why

The categorical imperative not an abstract truth, but a universal command.

should not the problem of practical morality be solved after the same fashion? We have been arguing here on the supposition that Mr. Spencer's analogy between mechanics and ethics holds good. But to us the analogy is very misleading. The contrast between absolute and relative ethics by no means corresponds to the contrast between abstract and concrete. To say so would be to mistake the ethical problem altogether. The categorical imperative is the expression, not of any general and abstract truth, but of an absolute and universal command, which claims to rule the inward life and outward action of man by governing all his desires, intentions, and aims. It is an absolute command, a law of inherent and unconditional obligation, which sets aside all considerations of prudence, personal affection, and general utility, and asserts its own supreme authority over all other precepts and injunctions whatsoever. A good will is an end in itself; and a good will, grounded on reverence for moral law, is good in itself and for itself alone, irrespective of any outward consequences, irrespective also of anything useful, or pleasant, or desirable, irrespective of fitness for any higher end, for this is the highest end.

We have a real guide to conduct.

If this be so, then we have a real guide to conduct. We are not constrained with Mr. Spencer to say that we cannot tell what duty is, and are not shut up to choose the least wrong. If we

recognise that right has not been built up out of pleasurable experiences, but has a majesty and a sanction in itself, then the absolute claim it has on us may be recognised and acted on, whatsoever the consequences may be.

We submit, then, that Mr. Spencer has failed to account for the facts of our moral consciousness, and that his system confessedly supplies no guidance to moral conduct. We need not consider further his conception of the straight man in a straight society. At present Mr. Spencer is conscious of an unfriendly environment. He has, by various iterations, to force alien conceptions on reluctant minds. He does not expect that "his conclusions will meet with any general acceptance," nor do we. But his own experience of a great mission and calling in the world ought to have made him reflect on the conclusions he has reached. Taking for the moment the estimate he has formed of his system of philosophy, looking at the persistency with which he has forced his conceptions on reluctant minds, and having regard to the anxiety he manifests to provide a scientific basis for morality, we might have expected from him a larger and a more generous estimate of the value of the work of individual man for man. He has steadfastly held his own, and has sought to benefit man—for of the nobleness of his purpose there can be no doubt. Why, then, should he not recognise in man what he finds

The Ethics of evolution misrepresents the facts of moral consciousness and fails to afford guidance to man.



in so large a scale in himself? Why not take account of the force of example as a moral motive, and of love to man as the great elevating force over human life? If the existence of Mr. Spencer and his work has been possible in an unfriendly environment, why should we not go further, and say, in opposition to his teaching, that the existence of a perfect man and an imperfect society is quite possible? No doubt he says categorically that

“the co-existence of a perfect man and an imperfect society is impossible.”

Ethics  
demand a  
perfect  
example.

But we recall to mind Plato's description of the just man. We quote from Jowett's Introduction to the *Republic* :—

“And now let us frame an ideal of the just and unjust. Imagine the unjust man to be master of his craft, seldom making mistakes and easily correcting them, having gifts of money, speech, strength, the greatest villain bearing the highest character ; and at his side let us place the just in his nobleness and simplicity, being not seeming, without name or reward, clothed in his justice only, the best of men who is thought to be the worst, and let him die as he has lived. I might add (but I would rather put the rest into the mouth of the panygerists of injustice—they will tell you) that the just man will be scourged, racked, bound, will have his eyes put out, and will at last be crucified, and all this because he ought to have preferred seeming to being.”<sup>1</sup>

The picture  
of Plato has  
had an  
historical  
fulfilment.

This picture which passed before the glowing imagination of Plato, has had an historical fulfilment. And while the memories of Gethsemane linger in the mind, Mr. Spencer will find it vain to tell man that

<sup>1</sup> Jowett's *Plato*, vol. iii., p. 21.

“conduct which has any concomitant of pain in any painful consequence is partially wrong.”

We find the criterion of right and wrong elsewhere, and we also find that by the confession of all, a perfect Man did once appear in an imperfect society, and gave Himself to the work of redeeming men from sin and misery, of showing them what human life ought to be, and may become; and of making a new world in which a perfect society may safely, gladly dwell. He showed man a more excellent way, not the old way of self-assertion, or of the rule of strength, or of having regard to pleasure, but the new way of returning good for evil, of bearing the cross, and of knowing the blessedness of sorrow. Christ's moral teaching stands in perfect contrast to the teaching of Mr. Spencer, different in origin, in method, in results, and in sanction, and we have the testimony of John Stuart Mill to the fact that no higher standard of living is conceivable than to live so that Christ shall approve your life. Those who have this as motive and reward, are not conscious of the vacuum which Mr. Spencer is so anxious to fill.

A perfect man in the midst of an imperfect society.

Christ's teaching a contrast to Mr. Spencer's.

In the life and work and teaching of Christ, we learn the true interpretation of the fact of our moral life. From Him we learn the real meaning of moral obligation, of our powerlessness to fulfil it, and of the pain, anguish and remorse, which we feel because we cannot do the things which we

Christ interprets our moral life.

How to  
become  
what we  
ought to be.

would. How shall we become what we feel we ought to be? We need to be placed in right relations to the supreme moral law, we need a strength beyond our own to lift us to the level of a holy life, and through Christ and by union with Him we obtain what we need. Why should we be afraid to say, that from Christ we have received the true ideal of moral life, as from Christ we receive the strength to live up to it? He has atoned for our sins, He has deepened and cleansed all the moral convictions, He has embodied the highest ideal of a perfect moral life, and He has poured into human life a tide of living strength, which is making this world a world of righteousness, purity, and peace. We make no rash prophecy, we are simply stating a fact of human experience which may be ascertained by ordinary historical inquiry, when we say that, whoso has the life and teaching of Christ, has enough for life and guidance. He has a motive for living, an aim for life, strength by the Holy Spirit to bear and do, and hope to crown and reward his efforts. The moral life inspired by Christ, and guided by Him, has also the surest scientific truth; and it will become more apparent as time rolls on, and experience widens, that Christian Ethics are the only true scientific Ethics.

Christian  
ethics.

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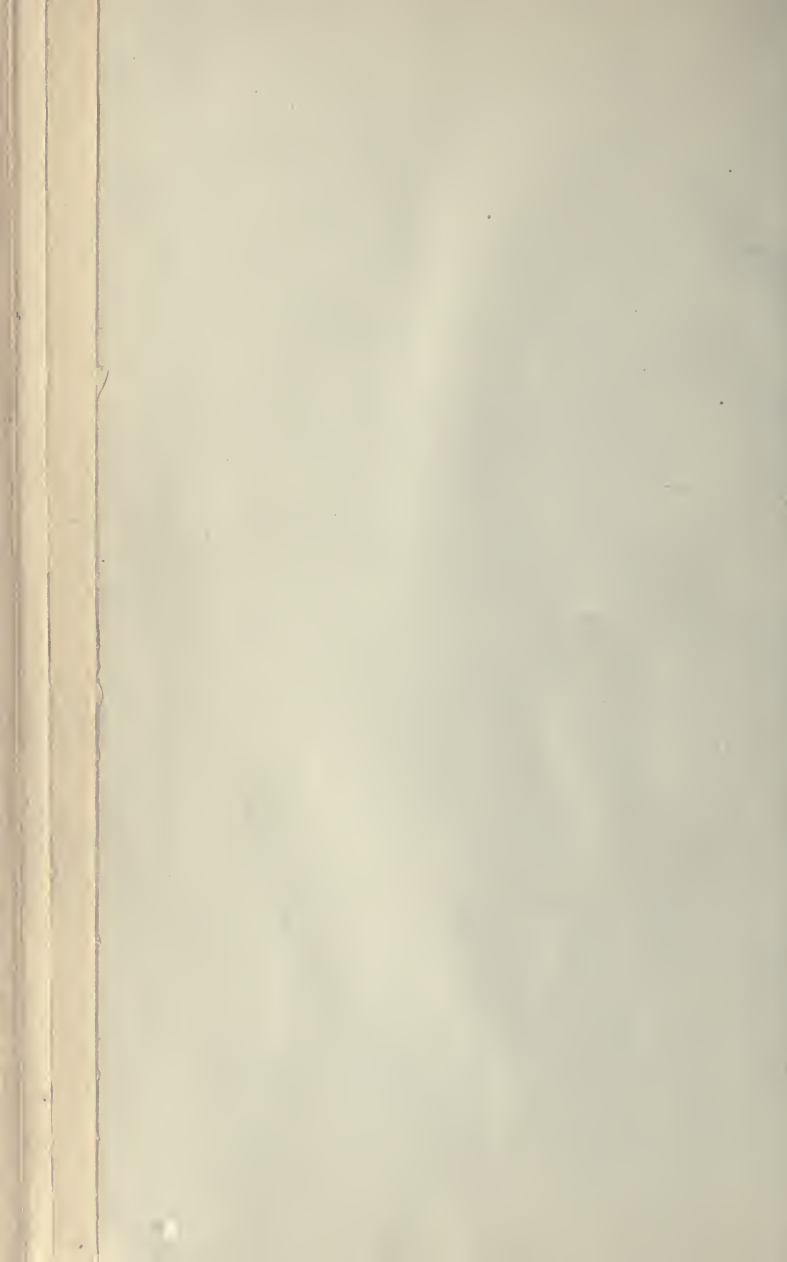
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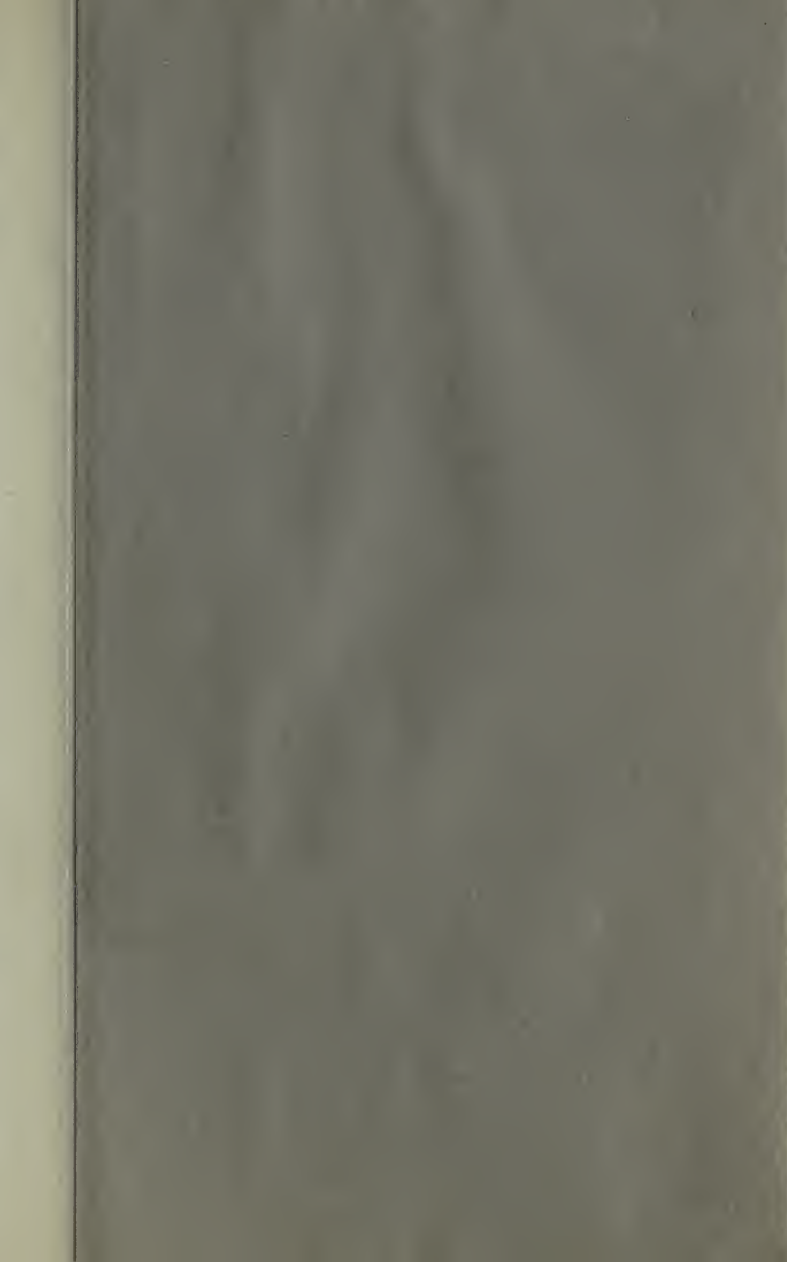
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